# Adaptations to the Neoliberal City

A Comparative Investigation of Faith-based Organisations in Rotterdam, the Netherlands and Philadelphia, USA

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RIJKSUNIVERSITEIT GRONINGEN

# Adaptations to the Neoliberal City

## A Comparative Investigation of Faith-based Organisations in Rotterdam, the Netherlands and Philadelphia, USA

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# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Having lived in a few different countries and cultural contexts, a comparative lens is one that I often default to, so it was serendipity that I encountered a research project where those comparative instincts would be useful.

My advisors, Prof. Dr. Inge Hutter and Dr. Justin Beaumont, have encouraged my comparative instincts throughout the research process, providing guidance and shaping the direction of the project. Each has made a distinctive contribution to my scholarly development. At the start of my dissertation, I had given methodological issues a cursory glance, unconvinced that I would find them interesting. At Inge's encouragement, I delved further into methodology and found myself recognizing that questions of knowledge production were deeply entwined with one's methodological choices. I have come to very much appreciate Inge's enthusiasm for methodology, for without it, I would not have developed my own methodological engagement. Justin guided me into broadening my thinking from planning to geography. A passionate advocate for urban geography theory, he urged me to reconsider and complicate my ideas about space and place. Our shared curiosity about the meaning of faith-based organisations and the changing nature of the relationship between the secular and religious led to many conversations that have informed my thinking.

At the *Religion, Politics and the Postsecular City* conference in Groningen, I was fortunate to meet other researchers examining secularism and religious initiatives and these conversations provided further stimulus for my research. In particular, I am grateful to Paul Cloke, Jason Hackworth, Chris Baker and Tanja Winkler for providing comments that helped sharpen my work. In the first year of my research, Prof. Dr. Paulus Huigen

offered much guidance that helped set the trajectory of this project. At the very end of the project, the Reading Committee provided careful and productive feedback and I am grateful to the Readers for their time and insight.

Researching and writing this dissertation has brought many joys and challenges and so many people have sustained me through the process. One of the joys of having lived in so many different places is that I have met such a range of people who have been welcoming and supportive. One of the challenges has been making cultural adjustments and finding one's way through new cities and contexts. Moving to the Netherlands inevitably resulted in some culture shock and the need to learn some new skills. I am very grateful to my sister, Sherry, whose own international move coincided with mine, for listening to my incredulity at the many surprises and cultural challenges that were encountered in those first months of moving. Sherry's tolerance of what must have been endless whinging and her commiseration made the adjustment much smoother. My parents perhaps set a peripatetic example that allowed me to contemplate and relatively easily move across cultures; as broadening as these moves were, I am very glad that they chose to end our journey in Vancouver.

In Groningen, others helped me navigate the town and the university. Although we shared an office only briefly, Sjoerd Zeelenberg was extraordinarily generous with his time and energy. Sjoerd helped me get settled in our office and to understand departmental and faculty policies. He shared his papers on geographical theory and was always willing to offer his interpretation on everything from the socio-spatial dialectic to why bicycles were able to remain upright! These last discussions led to what has become one of my favourite moments at the Faculty: where Sjoerd, Ivo, Chris and a few others attempted to help me learn to ride a bike. Since my helpers were all Dutch, they had learned to ride as very young children and it turned out that they were not able to remember much about how one actually learns to ride a bike - it was something that was so instinctual as to be unknown. The afternoon was both entertaining and perplexing as an adult woman attempted to find some sense of balance, putting her feet down every few centimetres while Sjoerd and company watched, at a loss to explain what I would need to do in order to progress more than a few centimetres at a time! I did eventually learn to ride a bike and it was not a tricycle as Sjoerd had feared. Helping me find my way around the city, Ajay often acted as an unofficial tour guide, showing me where I could buy spices, explaining Dutch language classes and giving me tips on where to buy a bike. Without him, I might not have found some of my favourite spots in Groningen.

Since leaving Groningen, I've especially missed my late afternoon conversations with Chris where we drank probably too much coffee, thought through planning processes and imagined what the world would be like if we ran it (much better, of course!). We were lucky too that Sierdjan would stop by and offer a more practical perspective. Many others

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In the U.S, I am thankful for Marilyn's generosity in lending me a car that she wasn't using, so I could get around Philadelphia; it meant that travelling between research sites was not a half day ordeal on Septa, saving me an enormous amount of time. Other persistent friends from Ithaca, Heidi, Kathy, Gwen and Ted, all cheered me on with encouragement and kind reality checks; I'm lucky to have friends who will do both. And perhaps the most persistent friend of all, Gwendolyn, has always inspired, challenged, and supported me exceptionally well.

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I'm sure there are a few people who I have forgotten to list here and I hope they will accept apologies for my forgetfulness.

This dissertation, of course, could not have been completed without the co-operation of the organizations and individuals whose words and actions form the basis of this study. Since many of the organisations and individuals requested anonymity, I cannot name them, but I am deeply grateful for their openness and thoughtfulness. Each of these individuals provided me with access to their lives and freely shared their insights into various aspects of faith-based organizations, community, and government services. Without them, we would not have a view into faith-based organisations or the meaning and place they hold in the lives of constituents and neighbourhood residents. I deeply appreciate their time and willingness to be open with an inquisitive researcher.

Candice Dias
Philadelphia, USA
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# 1 INTRODUCTION

At the end of the last century, religion seemed to be on the wane. Its relevance in the modern world was uncertain. Indeed, many scholars had consigned religion to the realm of the past, with the possible exception of the U.S.A., modernity had relegated religion to the margins. Perhaps nowhere did this seem more certain than the city. What could be more modern than the contemporary city? The city exemplified the inevitable march of secularization that scholars had long predicted (Berger, 1969; Bruce, 1992; Tschannen, 1991). The terrorist attacks in New York, on September 11, 2001, hinted at something amiss in this polarization of secularity and religion. Subsequent attacks in London and Barcelona raised questions about whether the modern city had vanquished religion. In these concerns, the term "religion" seemed to have specific content: it usually meant Islam. However, the narrowness of this definition hid a different reality about the *persistence* of religion in putatively secular cities (Berger, Davie, & Fokas, 2008 Cloke, 2010, Beaumont and Baker, 2011, among others). Persistence, of course, suggests something that has existed and continues to do so; in other words, religion had existed in secular cities and continued to do so. Religion in the secular city was not a new phenomenon and certainly not one instigated by implicitly "foreign" Islam (Casanova, 1994; Chaves, 2001; Cnaan, 2006; Davie, 2006, among others).

Why was religion so enduring in modern societies which for some time seemed destined to evolve beyond religious belief? For a growing number of scholars, the answer to this conundrum might be teased out of the role of religion in cities and the persistence of some faith-based organisations and the appearance of others. An additional theme was beginning to emerge: secularism might have found an enabling

twin in neoliberalism. Examining issues of social exclusion in the Netherlands, Justin Beaumont (2008a; Beaumont & Nicholls, 2007a; Beaumont & Noordegraaf, 2007) began linking the privatization and marketization elements of neoliberalism with the changing role of faith-based organisations. In the U.S. context, Jason Hackworth suggested that the rhetorical moves of neoliberalism were creating spaces marked for faith-based organisations (J. Hackworth, 2010a, 2010b; J. Hackworth & Akers, 2011). A growing body of work was hinting at an entwinement between secularism and neoliberalism that might explain the persistence of religion through a semi-institutional role at the meso-scale. A European 7th Research Framework project, *Faith-Based Organisations and Exclusion in European Cities*, known as FACIT, found that in seven European countries, faith-based organisations provided valuable services and played an important role in filling in gaps left by neoliberal state withdrawal. These studies pointed to phenomena in Europe and the U.S., that bore surprising similarities; given theorizing that often casts Europe as secular and the U.S. as religious (Berger, Davie, & Fokas, 2008; Davie, 2006), this was unexpected. This thesis project was developed in response to these unanticipated similarities which also suggested that there is perhaps something distinctive about cities that create similar responses to religion.

Given the conventional polarizing of the U.S. and Europe, the time seemed ripe for a comparative study. The Netherlands has been seen as an exemplar of secularism, as well as centralized planning and rational government services. Significantly, in the U.S. and the Netherlands, it is Christianity that has occupied the role of the dominant and indigenous religion and has been in both societies, enduring. While other religions have emerged, among them the newer presence of Islam, it has been indigenous Christianity that continues to dominate. The appearance of other religions has nudged the conversation about religion towards a broader purview while simultaneously revealing a not so covert fear of religious others. But these fears are not about theological divergence or a conflict between deities, rather they are about creating trust, navigating community and understanding communal religion in the context of changing institutional and policy contexts.

The heterogeneity of cities has allowed cities to be rich sites of creativity and vibrancy, but cities are also sites of transition and change; they are the experimental laboratories of the societies in which they are embedded. In the Global North, cities have born the brunt of the shift from industrialisation through de-industrialisation to a post-industrial state. This has been especially pronounced in the USA where city economies have emptied out and city populations have followed, leaving sparsely populated and fragmented cities that often struggle to sustain themselves. In the Netherlands while city dwellers have not abandoned the city on the same scale, the city has drawn new attention as the site where immigrants, the poor and the marginal congregate. In both countries, the city is often left with those who are unable to leave.

The current academic discourse about faith-based organisations (FBOs) is comprised of two parallel investigational thrusts: first, FBOs as policy tool, and secondly, FBOs as

theological expression. In the U.S., especially under the last Bush Administration there was interest in FBOs as possible replacements for or supplements to secular social service providers and workforce development agents. This in turn led to a renewed policy and rights oriented discussion of the separation of church and state and the rights of religious citizens versus secular citizens (Kennedy 2003). In contrast, perhaps due to the myth of the Netherlands as Europe's most secularised country, discussions of FBOs in the Dutch context have largely remained within the realm of FBOs as theological agents and as expressions of theological values (Baart 2004; Knippenberg 2005; Sengers 2005). This project seeks first, to bring these parallel and artificially separated streams together so that these organisations are examined as active civil society actors, filling in gaps left by the secular state but also as theologically differentiated actors; and second, to acknowledge *place* by adding a local, neighbourhood dimension. In contrast to some strains of current discourse, I examine faith-based organisations as sites of encounter and mediators between the state and residents and between residents themselves, viewing them as civil society actors rather than theological agents.

A related and often implicit question that arises when a scholar of the city introduces the topic of faith-based organisations, is why does religion in these urban contexts require special attention? The preceding argument suggests that it is the persistence of religion, its unchanging presence that comprises one key element of its importance. Perhaps the second argument that must be made is that secularism too, has shown its own tenacity (see for example the vociferous arguments of Dawkins, 2006; Hitchens, 2007. It is time perhaps, to accept that these two strains of thought that compete for the souls (or bodies *sans* souls) of modern citizens are both equally "sticky". Religion of various permutations and secularism are both, each earnest in its own way, here to stay. Moreover, while they coexist uneasily and often at odds with each other in theoretical and philosophical discourse, the empirical reality suggested by this study is that in the gritty daily life of cities, they intermingle, flowing and receding from shared and overlapping spaces. Cloke and Beaumont (2012) view this as a *rapprochement* between two concepts warily eyeing each other; but surely *rapprochement* signals that each holds its stance and maintains its distinctiveness – instead, as the role of religion shifts and it searches for new relevance, might we witness a melding that makes it harder to disentangle the secular and religious? Rather than exchanging wary looks, I suggest that it is imperative for the adherents of religion and secularity to learn to live with each other non-competitively, not with mere tolerance, but acceptance. For secularists, this means we might look upon religion sympathetically, accepting that it holds deep meaning for many people and although this meaning may not be easily comprehensible viewed through a secular lens, automatic dismissal is not a useful response. Equally, religious adherents might recognize that secular thought can create individuals and communities that truly care for each other and seek to live ethically, with a deep commitment to justice. Whether this creates a space of theo-ethics as Cloke suggests, where (mostly Christian) believers transform secular space, or

where, as the respondents in this study suggest the transformative effect is reciprocal, it seems clear to me that secularists and religionists alike must move beyond tolerance to acceptance. It is with this view of mutual sympathy as imperative that I have embarked on this study.

## 1.1. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The research questions for this project have been prompted by two debates: the first, about the role and relationship of faith-based organisations to the neighbourhood and non-faith community; the second, about the role of religion and secularism in modern societies. In research on marginalized city neighbourhoods, scholarly conventional wisdom has had it that in the face of disinvestment and increasing poverty, churches remain; this argument has prompted rebuttals suggesting that despite the large number of churches in marginalized neighbourhoods, church and neighbourhood remain unconnected (Ammerman 1997; McRoberts 2005). The second debate is one that situates secularism and religion in opposition to each other. Following the secularization thesis scholars have suggested that secularization pushes out religion because secularity and modernity lie in opposition to religion (Berger, 1969; Casanova, 1994; D. Martin, 2005; Tschannen, 1991); however, following the events of the last decade, religion has (re)gained public prominence and it is clear not only that religion does not fade in the face of secularism, but that it co-exists with modernity and secularity. In Europe in particular, there is an increasing tendency to rely upon religion as a proxy for ethnicity in managing burgeoning non-Western, and particularly Islamic immigrant groups (e.g. Dinham and Lowndes 2008). This move to include religion as one of many civil society actors is indicative of a secularity where 'faith…is one human possibility among others'; it is a secular that is flexible and responsive (Baird 2000; Taylor 2007). In my research, I ask questions that seek to connect these debates and ground them in empirical cases in Rotterdam and Philadelphia. The questions that guide this study are:

- What do faith-based organisations do?
- What is the role of faith-based organisations in the neighbourhoods and cities in which they are located?
- In what ways does religion influence the activities of these organisations?

Underlying these questions is the fundamental question, why do faith-based organisations exist in putatively secular societies?

## 1.2. STRUCTURE OF THE THESIS

In Chapter 2, I situate faith-based organisations within the theoretical landscape. In doing so, I take an interdisciplinary perspective that seeks to connect disciplinary strands in order to assist in making sense of the urban reality of faith-based organisations. From geography,

I draw upon discussions of neoliberalism and from sociology, I draw upon discussions of secularism. Neoliberalism provides an explanatory framework for the processes of devolution and privatization which create spaces for faith-based organisations to become active in various service provision activities. Secularism's evolution from a concept that was oppositional to religion and posited religion as anti-modern to one that accommodates religion and flexibly moulds to it, accounts for the persistence of the element of faith, in these organisations. Reviewing the literatures on neoliberalism and secularism, I contend that faith-based organisations are situated at the nexus of neoliberalism and secularism and that their persistence and activities illustrate the convergence of these two processes. The explanatory power of theories of neoliberalism and secularism lie at the macro level, while the faith-based organisations in this study are highly local; to understand the connection between the macro and the local, I draw upon the middle range theories of social capital, social cohesion and community.

In Chapter 3, I review the epistemological underpinnings as well as the methods used in data gathering and analysis. The study was approached from a concern with the impacts of the flows of power in the everyday lives of ordinary residents; as such it is positioned in feminist and post-colonial epistemologies that urge reflexivity and particular attention to everyday encounters and geographies (P. Cloke, Cooke, Cursons, Milbourne, & Widdowfield, 2000; Dyck, 2005; G. Rose, 1997). This position suggested the selection of grounded theory so that the data could inform theory. Fostering an iterative relationship between data and theory would allow the data to be at the centre of the study; modifications to theory and analysis would emerge from the everyday worlds of the informants. In order to gain a better view into these everyday realities, the case study method using comparison was used to assist in understanding the role of faith-based organisations in both cities. As this was a qualitative study examining what is often viewed as a controversial topic, it was imperative to maintain an awareness of positionality and to engage as a reflexive researcher. In this chapter I reflect on the perceptions and concerns of study informants who viewed investigations into their religion and religious activities with concern; I elaborate on the ethical issues I encountered and describe the framework of reflection and negotiation that I used to manage my position as the research instrument while in the field. The chapter concludes with some notes on the limitations of the methods used and challenges encountered in data collection.

Chapter 4 begins the empirical segment of this thesis; here, faith-based organisations in the Dutch city of Rotterdam are examined. Rotterdam is placed in context, both within the Netherlands and within processes of secularization as they have unfolded in the Netherlands; this is especially salient as the Dutch system of pillarization (*verzuiling*) was in place for most of the 20th century embedding religion at the centre of social service provision and various aspects of public life. Although pillarization has been dismantled for some time, its legacy remains apparent at the level of meso-institutions (Hupe, 1993). Following this background, the chapter goes on to examine the activities of the nine

organisations included in the study. The organisations identified Rotterdam's immigrants as their primary target constituency and in formal and informal ways, they attempted to serve local immigrant populations. The organisations varied in the degree to which they incorporated immigrants into their organisational structure and approaches to language use in particular separated immigrant-permeated organisations from primarily non-immigrant organisations. The former tended to offer flexibility in language use, often actively accommodating languages other than Dutch, while the latter saw language as a key integration tool; their resistance to other languages illustrated their self-perception as agents of integration. While the focus on immigrants was explicit, it was coupled with an implicit attention to place; the faith-based organisations in Rotterdam were both shaped by their neighbourhoods and in turn deployed efforts to shape the neighbourhood. The prominence of a focus on immigrants also positioned the organisations as the connective tissue linking immigrants to city and to larger Dutch society; the organisations' activities attempted to bond residents to neighbourhood, city and to the nation-state. Interestingly, the role of religion within the organisations presented a paradox: on the one hand, the organisations were faith driven and derived, on the other, they often downplayed the role of religion, in some cases even discounting it as an important element.

From Rotterdam, Chapter 5 turns to faith-based organisations in Philadelphia. As a city of neighbourhoods, the focus in Philadelphia was on four organisations, three of which were neighbourhood-based while the fourth was primarily directed towards city-wide efforts. The neighbourhood-based organisations operated in West Philadelphia and the Northeast, each of these were neighbourhoods in transition. In the former, processes of gentrification were drawing in middle-class, primarily White gentrifiers and displacing long-term, working class African-Americans; while the Northeast was shifting from an enclave occupied by ethnic Whites (Irish and Italian) to an area that hosted African-Americans and immigrants. These processes of population transition coupled with longer-term effects of de-industrialization left these neighbourhoods socially fragmented. Some of the organisations displayed a keen awareness the lack of social cohesion and social institutions around which residents could centre their attentions. From this awareness these organisations developed attempts to position themselves as sites for building neighbourhood cohesion; key to this was an understanding of community that was both structured and broad enough to encompass not only co-religionists but neighbourhood residents as well. Two particular efforts are examined in greater detail as they illustrate the ways in which these organisations seek to engage with neighbourhood processes: the first is an examination of an initiative intended to act as an antidote to processes of gentrification. The organisation sought to rehabilitate abandoned housing stock in order to create affordable housing that would permit longer-term residents who were being priced out of the neighbourhood to remain. The second effort encompassed a series of programmatic activities designed to provide the neighbourhood physical sites upon which to encounter each other, as well as a series of persistent gestures designed to

increase public familiarity so that residents could recognise each other as constituents of the same community.

In Chapter 6, I analyse the meaning, implications and value of the activities undertaken by the faith-based organisations in Rotterdam and Philadelphia. Three themes emerge that are common to organisations in both sites: first, that the organisations whether deliberately or inadvertently, connect residents to place. For the organisations, the recognition of the neighbourhood, city or nation-state as an element that shapes residents' lives is a key component of working against fragmentation and creating a sense of social cohesion. Second, the organisations were committed to creating or re-creating community; they did this in divergent ways, but a persistent theme was that their ideas of community were counter-cultural. That is, organisations saw their efforts as diverging from mainstream social and cultural life. Lastly, the role of religion was often far more nebulous than might be anticipated by their faith-based nature. The organisations often struggled with what role religion played for them; in some cases, they attempted to largely discount it, while in others, they viewed it as central to all their activities. Regardless of their stance, religion guided them towards holistic and long-term views of their relationship to their constituents placing them at odds with outcome-oriented neoliberal efficiencies. Finally, in light of these empirical findings, I revisit the role of neoliberalism and secularism in how these organisations are positioned and in their activities.

Chapter 7, which concludes this thesis, offers further reflections on the policy and research issues raised by the study.

As I noted at the outset, the purpose of this thesis is severalfold: to help extend our understanding of the persistence of religion in secular contexts; to explore the effects of neoliberalism as it interacts with secularism at the micro-scale; and not least, perhaps to understand the nexus of the secular and religious from a perspective that offers equal sympathy to both. I have endeavoured to avoid the putatively neutral view that more often tends to polarize religion and secularism and instead adopt an approach that is sympathetic to religious belief as well as to the secular desire to be free from theologically-derived constraints. I hope that the reader finds that the cases contained here play some small part in extending an argument for mutual sympathy.

# 2 THEORETICAL CONSIDERATIONS: MAKING SENSE OF LOCALISED FAITH-BASED ORGANISATIONS

Despite divergent cultural, state and welfare systems, in the first decade of the 21st century, religion seems to have once again come to the fore in post-industrial democracies. In the aftermath of the September 11th, 2001 attacks in New York, the March 11th, 2004 bombings in Madrid and the July 7th, 2005 attacks in London, religion was suddenly cast in a central role in the unfolding of city life. Governments in post-industrial and renowned secular scholars such as Jürgen Habermas (2006) began to view religion as an important component of society's public social life. At the same time, policy rhetoric (Atkinson, 2000; Denters & L. Rose, 2005; Lowndes & Skelcher, 1998) increasingly emphasised public-private partnerships, community-led development and other tactics towards putatively restrained government and increased private, citizen-led initiatives. These two trends placed faith-based organisations in a unique position: they became newly visible as agents of religion but also drew attention for their position as private, frequently community-based, actors. In this study, the two democracies which are examined, the Netherlands and the U.S., despite their fundamental differences, contain cities in which faith-based organisations are visible actors. Why these organisations exist, what they do and how they are received reveal the pervasiveness of urban neoliberalism both in ideology and practise, as well as the ongoing tension between secularism and religion in modern cities. Given the growing interest in religion by a secular state and secular elite, I attempt in this dissertation, through case studies in Rotterdam and Philadelphia to provide a more detailed exploration of the relevance and value of faith-based organisations (FBOs).

In order to understand the position and role of faith-based based organisations, these actors must be situated within macro and middle-range theoretical contexts. Faith-based

organisations are not a new development, yet how they are viewed and used, and how they see themselves has undergone shifts over the last decade. In the scholarly analysis of these organisations, the questions arise: why are these organisations drawing public and policy attention? Are they now performing different functions, if so, in what ways? What can and do these organisations contribute? In this study, the answers to these questions were derived at two theoretical levels: first, using the iterative techniques of grounded theory (which is discussed in greater detail in Chapter 3 on methodology) (Charmaz, 2005; Glaser & Strauss, 2006; Hesse-Biber, 2007) middle-range theoretical concepts were established based on data gathering in the field. This yielded linkages to the middle-range theory of social capital. These theories proved to usefully explain *what* the organisations did and *how*, yet they left unanswered the larger questions of why these organisations were suddenly visible and participating in social life in putatively new ways. For these latter questions, we must turn to the macro theories that offered explanations for the two primary elements of the *why* of faith-based organisations: neoliberalism that explained the shift in attention to the local, community and private, rather than public, efforts at changing social life; and secularism, that explains why religion persists in these organisations, why they are in fact *faith*-based organisations. To understand faith-based organisations then, the macro theories of neoliberalism and secularism are as necessary as the middle-range theory of social capital.

## 2.1. THE ROLE OF SCALE WITHIN THEORY

Needless to say, theoretical constructs aid in the understanding of social phenomena, yet often the discourses of grand theories that seek to universally and broadly explain the social world can seem distinct from the everyday, micro activities of most social actors. It is here that middle-range theories provide useful connective tissue between micro worlds and macro phenomena (Merton, 1968). Grand theory and middle-range theory are not exclusive, although the relationship between the two can be complex. Grand theories offer general and large scale explanations; they seek to elucidate social systems, social change and other phenomena on a macro scale that is all-encompassing (Parsons, 1951; Turner & Boyns, 2001). In contrast, middle-range theories "are empirically grounded theories" (Merton, 1968, p. 61) "close enough to the observed data to be incorporated in propositions that permit empirical testing" (Merton, 1968, p. 39). Middle-range theories can thus be a literal middle ground between the descriptive detail of the data and the universalizing explanatory drive of grand theory. The threads connecting data and middle-range theory are often numerous while those between middle-range and grand theory are likely to be fewer and singular. Borrowing from physiology, one might suggest the ties between data and middle-range to be akin to capillaries – they are numerous and each containing small amounts of blood, or for the purposes of social science, small-scale abstractions – while the linkages between the middle-range theories and grand theories are akin to arteries and veins, becoming abstractions on a larger scale.

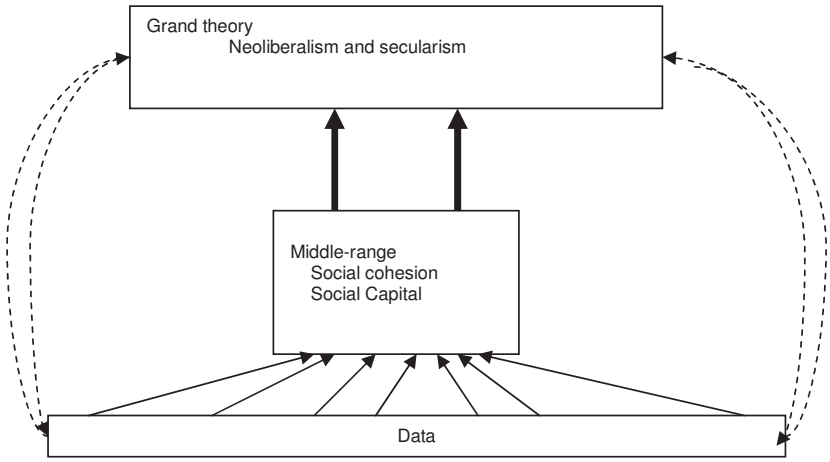


**Figure 2.1.** Theory and scale

This leads, of course, to the question of how theory and scale operate within this study. Following the reasoning above, the data is the foreground, as Goffman might suggest "where the action is" (2005); while social capital is the middle-range theory that is directly derived from the data and directly modified by it; and the theories of neoliberalism and secularism provide the background for the phenomenon of faith-based organisations. In entwining strands of abstracted theoretical debates to ones that are empirically grounded, I seek to avoid the tendency to create theory in separation from actual events, which are so often "imposition[s] *on* history rather than an inference *from* history" (D. Martin, 2005, p. 19); similarly, I have used grounded theory (addressed in greater detail in Chapter 3 on methodology) to ensure that theoretical debates and social reality might have a reciprocal relationship. The intermingling of different theoretical scales in this study reflects both my conviction that useful theorizing should not occur in isolation from empirical realities but that one should strive for theory and empirics to be mutually constitutive; and also reflects the shifting role of theory and theoretical scales during the course of the research process. Since it is impossible for any researcher to enter the field *tabula rasa*, without existing suppositions derived from previous theoretical knowledge and observation, I entered this research process with an awareness of the transformative effects of neoliberalism and secularism. Once ensconced in the field, these grand theoretical discourses seemed irrelevant to the details of my research context and it was here that the processes of grounded theory's iterative theory development facilitated the emergence of the middle-range theory of social capital. On returning from the field and embarking on deeper, multi-layered analysis, the grand theories that had previously seemed irrelevant returned to provide valuable interpretive frames for the positioning of empirical activity within macro shifts and transformations. Suddenly theoretical scale and

geographical scale converged and it became clear that just as neighbourhood reflects global shifts, that a "glocal" orientation is necessary even when we study the local scale, so too it seemed with theory. That is, just as micro worlds cannot exist without global worlds and vice versa, neither should theoretical scales exist in isolation from each other.

With these theoretical and scalar considerations in mind, in the following sections, I will add ideas from the debate on social capital to the structures of neoliberalism and secularism. Together these concepts – neoliberalism and secularism at the most abstract conceptual level –and social capital at the meso-theoretical level, guide my investigation into the meaning and value of faith-based organisations. Neoliberalism, which encouraged a withdrawing of government and asserted various strategies of private "empowerment" had already found a stronghold in the U.S. and U.K. and increasingly Western European nations, including the Netherlands, were incorporating neoliberal elements (Beaumont & Nicholls, 2007b; Cox, 2001; Green-Pedersen, Van Kersbergen, & Hemerijck, 2001) and melding them with other policy and cultural imperatives. In Europe, the implicit entwining of immigrants and religion and the neoliberal hollowing out of the state found convergence in the attention to and sometimes instrumental use of faith-based organisations. In the U.S., faith-based organisations garnered particular attention under the presidential administration of George W. Bush and neoliberal dreams of state withdrawal. Neoliberalism and a particular kind of secular – one that incorporates religion rather than denies it – begin then, to have a distinctive connection. In the following sections, I will review key elements of neoliberalism and secularism, and then reflect on the nature of the links between them. I then reflect on the role of place, especially considering the importance of local, neighbourhood settings, and finally I consider the notion of social capital, which has been hailed by some academics and many policy makers as the special contribution of local scale activities.

## 2.2. SECULARISM AND THE PERSISTENCE OF FAITH[1]

Fundamentally, secularism has been used to describe a societal shift whereby religion has receded from the sphere of public power and has been replaced by various institutions cast as "neutral", "humanist" or simply, in opposition to religion, as "secular". Of course, the process of secularisation has been a complex one, and scholars of secularisation have sought to untangle the elements that characterise it. Early analysts such as Peter Berger, posited secularism and religion in opposition to each other; Berger suggested that secularization pushes out religion because secularity and modernity lie in opposition to

[1] A portion of the text in this section has been adapted from Dias, C., & Beaumont, J. (2010). Postsecularism or late secularism? Faith creating place in the U.S., in: A. Molendijk, J. Beaumont, & C. Jedan (Eds.), *Exploring the Postsecular: The Religious, the Political, and the Urban*. Brill Academic Publishers.

religion (Berger, 1969; Keenan, 2002). This contention became commonly referred to as "the secularization thesis". In this view, the decline of religion was inevitable in the face of modernization: the modern being and religion were oppositional and secularization and the attendant wilting of religion were necessary in order for a society to become modern (Martin, 2005). This process of religion retracting from the public sphere was seen to be accompanied by its increasing privatization, along with a process of differentiation where religion becomes one of many sub-systems (Casanova, 1994; Goldstein, 2009; Luckmann, 1967; Luhman, 1977) rather than the dominant or governing system of values and institutional structure. Given this linear teleology, the expectation was that the presence, visibility and power of religion would decline and eventually disappear from the modern world. However, the events of the last decade which have prompted religion to (re)gain public prominence have underscored not only that religion does not fade in the face of secularism, but that it co-exists with modernity and secularity.

The naturalized relationship between modernity and secularity has obfuscated the scholarly study of religious manifestations in the cities of modern democracies. This is in part because of the ideology of secularism itself, which developed alongside modern social sciences and became linked to Enlightenment derived ideas of modern progress and objectivity. David Martin, writing about sociology notes that the imperatives of the discipline reflect the history, culture and other elements of specificity of its own historical moment; that is, scholars are not exempt from being embedded in their historical specificity and this "*organizes* what we see" [emphasis original] (2002, p. 281). Similarly, in an essay examining the rise of "post-secularism", William Keenan states that sociology has ignored Durkheim's position that religion is "an elemental part of the human social condition" (Keenan, 2002, p. 279) and made secularism – the absence of religion – the ideologically dominant framework of sociology. While the identification of "the hegemonizing impulse of sociological secularism" (Keenan, 2002, p. 279) might suggest that it is only sociology that is guilty of an overwhelming secular framework, other disciplines from which urbanists emerge (such as geography) tend to exhibit the same tendencies, as the social sciences share something of a collective history in developing into academic disciplines. The dominance of secularism can also be seen in the general surprise exhibited by social scientists and philosophers whose attention has suddenly been drawn to religion prompted by the visibility of religious fundamentalism in the last decade, surprise which has prompted the assertion of the *post*secular.

The *postsecular* has been used both to describe an emerging temporal segment (Olson et al., 2010) and *postsecularity* has also been used as a framing perspective, in much the same manner as secularity (Taylor, 2007). It has provided scholars a means of signalling the transition from a period where religion has been unimportant in the public sphere to a new era of re-emergence and it has provided a response to the weaknesses of the secularization thesis. However, because postsecularism assumes that *secularism* has taken place and so raises the questions: to what extent to has there been a secular era and

has there in fact been a passage *beyond* the secular? This postsecular debate has largely been stimulated by Jürgen Habermas' acknowledgement of the importance of religion in the contemporary world during a speech given alongside the then Cardinal Ratzinger (later Pope Benedict XVI) in 2004. Initially for Habermas, "postsecular" indicated the contemporary period where Western Europe – and some other post-industrial democracies such as Canada and Australia – was experiencing a resurgence of religion, *after* having already been secularised. There was a curious non-specificity to Habermas' assertion. The assumption of a secular era that has come and gone also suffers from a certain empirical vagueness. When was the secular era, what constituted it, and what has changed that places us in a 'postsecular' realm? Charles Taylor's (2007) specification of three types of secularism provides a useful rebuttal to the Habermasian conception of the postsecular. In Taylor's typology, the first comprises the separation of church and state where the religious is removed from the explicit state; the second type of secularism is one where religious practice and belief decline; and the last type of secularism is one where "faith… is one human possibility among others" (2007, p. 3). Taylor describes a "secular" that is flexible and responsive, calling this last mode, "Secularity 3", although 'late secularism' suggested by Robert Baird (Habermas, 2008b) offers somewhat more clarity. Like Taylor, Baird suggests that simply because this manifestation of the secular does not forcefully subjugate religion, it is not any less secular.

In this understanding, the U.S. remains in a state of late secularism because little has changed in terms of the role of religion in U.S. public life. Of course, the legal separation of church and state remains – and the contestation around this fact remains consistent, fluctuating within a narrow range like the slight movement created around a horizon in a desert mirage – that is, it remains fixed, but there is always a certain amount of static around it. Similarly, religious organisations continue to play the role of filling in state gaps (if we assume, that the state should be a stronger welfare state) – but this situation is not dissimilar to the role of religion in the 19th century. The lack of a state derived safety net led to the emergence of the Salvation Army and other smaller-scale attempts at 'charity' to be provided to those who fell into the space between the state and market; these efforts connected the idea of religion with poverty and the plight of the marginalized. While it seemed possible that religion may have become more legislatively prominent at the national level with the establishment of the Charitable Choice Act and with the early efforts and promises of the second Bush Administration, in the end, the displacement of this agenda by the crises of terrorism and the Iraq war meant that the landscape of religion and politics changed relatively little.

In the years since his encounter with then Cardinal Ratzinger, Habermas has offered some modifications to his assertion of postsecularity. Most notably, he has allowed that the U.S. has had a more consistent presence of religion in its public life, first, suggesting that the U.S. was exceptional (as has Berger and Davie, 2008) but then somewhat conceding that the pattern of religious presence in the U.S. might perhaps reflect a new norm (Habermas,

2008a). Certainly, as I have suggested above, there has been a persistent role for religion in American social and public life at least for the last hundred and fifty years if not since the country's inception. I have also suggested that secularization as it has been conceived within the secularization thesis is first Eurocentric, and second, an ideology that has a universalist perspective at its core. This universalist perspective has assumed that secularisation is a Truth that applies to all societies – perhaps not uniformly – but with only minor variations (Martin, 2005; Leezenberg, 2010); it follows then, if secularisation is a (relatively) uniform process, then the same must be true of *post*secularisation and it can be asserted that social life has entered a *post*secular phase. First, surely the same mistake is made here that is made within dominant monotheistic religions: they assert a universal, uninflected reality. The drive to universality, is, contrary to what might be assumed at first glance, not about asserting the universality of human kind but about asserting the "universality" that is the coherence and uniformity of an imagined community called "the West" standing in opposition to another imagined community called "Islam", or less often, because of the clearly Orientalist nature of the term, "the East". Instead, if secularism is examined not as an ideology but as a descriptive term indicating a particular historical moment, much as neoliberalism is used descriptively, then secularism has not be superseded by *post*secularism (Finke & Stark, 1998; Kong, 2010); instead, borrowing from observers of neoliberalism, I suggest that secularism persists, but its development and expression is uneven. That is, to amend Brenner and Theodore's phrase (2002) actually existing secularism is uneven, inconsistent and does not – and in fact, could not – have a "pure" expression. The current period is one of late secularism because religion and the secular are typically legally, legislatively and regulatorily equal. This differs from what might be called the apex of secularism in that the implicit superiority of the secular and attendant inferiority of the religious is shifted to a levelled field; secularism implicitly placed religious, non-scientific, non-rational knowledge as less than and inferior to scientific, rational, secularist knowledge. Late secularism shifts this implicit hierarchy, equalizing the two, making religious and non-religious knowledge and thought systems as "good", that is, as valuable as secular scientific knowledge within the framework of the secular/religious separation, although the separation of the two persists (Baird, 2000). First, however, let us turn to gaining a better understanding of neoliberalism and to considering its connexion to secularism.

## 2.3. NEOLIBERAL RESTRUCTURING: CREATING OPPORTUNITIES FOR NON-STATE ACTORS

The drive towards privatization, public-private partnerships and community developed through processes of neoliberalization that began in the Anglo-American world in the early 1980s, and elements of which were adopted in other countries; these processes were not uniform, yet they held certain factors in common – primarily privatization and a marketization of activities that were previously viewed as part of a public, non-market

realm. While for ordinary observers, the prosperity of the 1990s aligned well with the modernist sense of progress and improvement for all – great cities like New York and London were being revived – "quality of life" issues were being addressed in these monoliths so that they became more liveable, more desirable and more profitable; what was good for the "new" global city was surely good for all. This veneer of wealth ignored second and lesser tier cities and never questioned for whom or why the city was becoming more liveable. Borrowing from developmental psychology, we might see the emergence of active neoliberalism in the 1980s as the neoliberal infant, while this ideology of prosperity in the 1990s marked the transition to neoliberalism as adolescent; eliding urban centres that continued to suffer the impacts of deindustrialisation and the increasing poverty and marginalization that became present especially in second tier cities. Changing economic landscapes and changing social conditions – especially the various tensions between older residents and newer ones in processes of gentrification and immigration – were shifting relationships and structures in cities.

Neoliberalism has been commonly used as a descriptor by critical geographers and political economists to indicate the period that followed Keynesian arrangements of state regulation and intervention that came to an end in the Anglo-American world in the early 1980s, as Thatcherite and Reaganite policies steered the state away from rhetorically active interventions to putatively limited interventions. Although the dominance of neoliberalism was most felt in the U.K. and U.S., the framework had piqued interest in many post-industrial democracies; its deployment continues to be most clearly seen in the Anglo-American context, but Western European nations – and perhaps especially the Netherlands – have incrementally adopted its rhetoric while exploring country-specific policy adaptations (for example, Kokx & van Kempen, 2010; Prasad, 2006; Schmidt, 2001; Swyngedouw, Moulaert, & Rodriguez, 2002). In each of these regions, for most of its active life, neoliberalism has operated within the realms of state intervention, regulatory issues and economic well-being and development. Temporally parallel, the role of faith and religion also experienced shifts, through processes of secularism – addressed in greater detail in the next section – but often faith-based organisations themselves experienced few changes. In large part due to neoliberalism's lack of expression in the social sphere and in part because of the seemingly inevitable progression of a certain kind of secularism, FBOs maintained their longstanding role as providers of emergency charity, with a few operating as state partners in social service provision. FBOs then, were often simply ignored by neoliberalism; however, as neoliberalization extended to the social sphere and found discourse partners in social capital and neocommunitarianism, FBOs garnered increasing attention.

Although the scholarship of theorizing about neoliberalism is rich, there is a certain circularity to it, in part, as Brenner and Theodore note (2002), because neoliberalism itself is uneven and there is a disjuncture between neoliberalism as an ideology and neoliberalism in practise. This unevenness and dissonance leads to a tension between the

need to universalize so that we can more precisely understand its definition and the need to nuance according to context, so that it can be recognized. In response to this dilemma, Brenner and Theodore have suggested a focus on "actually existing neoliberalism" replete with unevenness and specificity, while Peck and Tickell offer a distinction between neoliberalism as an ideology and descriptor of a given condition and neoliberalization as the process through which neoliberalism comes into being (2002). While there is a general consensus about the basic elements of neoliberalism, the processes of neoliberalization are more contested and the answer to the question, what constitutes neoliberalization is often answered teleologically: if it ends in neoliberalism, then it was a process of neoliberalization. As others have already noted (Castree, 2006, 2008) this is hardly a satisfying answer. Yet, perhaps we can complicate our understanding of the process (neoliberalization) and the end state (neoliberalism) by considering them in light of the (temporally) parallel processes of secularization.

Reviewing the debate on neoliberalism, it is clear that there is agreement on its common elements which Hackworth and Moriah have succinctly summarised as asserting that,

> [f]irst, the individual is the normative center of a society and should be as unencumbered by rules and collective responsibilities as possible. Second, the market is the most effective means through which individuals can maximize their own utility functions. Third, state actions that interfere with either individual autonomy or market relations lead to an autocratic society, regardless of their intentions (2006, p. 511).

These central ideas when operationalised in governance, have led to marketization where development is market determined, leading to the privatization of public goods and services, accompanied by a putative reduction in government intervention. Peck and Tickell (2002) have usefully framed actually existing neoliberalism as occurring in two phases, the first occurring in the late 1970s and through the 1980s, during which the neoliberal project was to undo the regulatory and policy framework of the Keynesian state, a "roll back" phase that "reflected the privileged place of destructive, 'antiregulatory' moments of the neoliberalization process" (Peck & Tickell, 2002, p. 396). Their periodization suggests a second, more aggressive neoliberalization beginning in the 1990s, where "neoliberalized state forms" created "forms of 'deep' neoliberalization and post-Keynesian statecraft" that sought to first, codify neoliberalism through state interventions and regulation and second, spread neoliberalism beyond the developed world through supranational bodies such as the IMF and World Bank (Peck & Tickell, 2002, p. 396). This is a "roll out" phase where putative restrained government actively intervenes to enact neoliberalism. This aggressive proselytization of neoliberalism normalizes it so that becomes viewed as "common sense" (Hackworth & Moriah, 2006; Jessop, 2002; Keil, 2002) undermining resistance and short-circuiting protest. Processes of neoliberalization then, can be seen to

operate at two levels: first, in disseminating the central idea of the minimalist state as both the ordinary and desirable mode of governance and second, in the contrasting actuality of shifting rather than retracting modes of government. Despite the convenience of this periodization, it is important to recall Brenner and Theodore's caution about neoliberalism's unevenness and in light of it, pay attention to the process itself (neoliberalization) in order to deploy the term more precisely.

The restructuring of the state and the rhetoric of the minimal state has prompted shifts in the formal and informal arrangements of social life, as well as the urban political economy that has drawn the attention of most commentators. It is perhaps in the realm of social life that everyday significance of scale becomes most apparent, at the city and sub-city scale, where the state provides services, residents receive services, interact with one another and create the social fabric that makes up urban settlements. At these local scales of city, community and neighbourhood, neoliberalism intersects with other "neo" ideologies so that actually existing neoliberalism in the ordinary social sphere becomes expressed in even more nuanced ways (Jessop, 2002). The discourse of the "third way" holds particular sway at this scale, encouraging public-private partnerships in the service of community "empowerment". It is most typically expressed in various forms of neocommunitarianism that assert a connection between economic development and community development, suggesting that "greater self-sufficiency can…[allow for] reinserting marginalized local economies into the wider economy" (Jessop, 2002, p. 463). The linking of economy and social conditions has elevated interest in civic organisations and civil society more generally, stimulating efforts to empower civil society with the intention that a strong civil society will allow complete state retraction from the social sphere. This meshes well with the "glocalizing" influences of neoliberalism that privilege the supranational scale and while putatively increasing the power of non-state, privatized (or privatizing) local actors. Later in this chapter, this discourse will be considered in more detail, and I will suggest an alternative lens through which to view the role of the local site.

## 2.4. WHERE "ACTUALLY EXISTING NEOLIBERALISM" MEETS "ACTUALLY EXISTING SECULARISM"

In the previous sections, I have briefly reviewed elements of secularism and of neoliberalism separately; the question I turn to now is, how are these two concepts relevant to each other? It is clear from the discussion above, that each concept is embedded in a specific disciplinary perspective: scholars of neoliberalism tend to be situated in political science, geography and planning, while scholars of secularism tend to emerge from philosophy, sociology and the humanities. Yet, each provides a distinct conceptual frame with which to analyse current, co-temporaneous aspects of social life.

The relationship between neoliberalism and secularism is both complementary and facilitating. First they are descriptors that bear some temporal overlap; second, they share

some overlapping conceptual elements. Both are concerned with aggressive elements of late capitalism that force privatization and marketization: neoliberalism pushes for the privatization of government services and market-driven development; similarly, during the same era, secularism forces the privatization of religion and also propels religion into a marketplace model, where religious adherents become consumers, choosing belief according to consumption preference and lifestyle (Davies & Herbert, 1993; Healey, 1998; Meegan & Mitchell, 2001). Like policy and services that were monopolized by government, religious institutions found themselves without a monopoly and were forced into competition with each other. Neoliberalism and secularism have also had an impact on scale: they have shifted the emphasis to the local, albeit in different ways. The "glocalizing" impact introduced by neoliberalism has shifted emphasis to the parallel streams of the global and the very local; while religion too has lost its meso-level influence and has attempted to re-emerge in the public sphere in the form of highly localized, fragmented, grassroots groups and coalitions. Secularism appears to have acted as "push" force, driving religion into the private sphere and out of the public realm, reducing the role of religious institutions as meso-scale actors; simultaneously, neoliberalism has had a role as a "pull" factor, drawing religion into small-scale, local activity – as for example, when the Catholic Church has had diminishing influence as a city or regional stakeholder, exerting power increasingly only at the neighbourhood level.

In reviewing the narrative of secularism and secularisation, Casanova added a layer of complexity by highlighting the deprivatization of religion in the 1980s. Casanova's emphasis was primarily on the role that religion came to play in the democratization processes of countries without a democratic basis; in these instances, religious institutions and understandings were key actors in encouraging the move to democracy. The assertion that neoliberalism intersects with secularism to offer religion, via faith-based organisations, a new place of interest builds on Casanova's coupling of religious institutions and democratization. Instead of democracy, the paired process in this case is neoliberalism. While Casanova's work highlighted the importance of large-scale institutional actors such as national Catholic churches, neoliberalism draws small scale actors into the public arena. Since neoliberalization favours the two extremes of scale – global actors and local actors – at the expense of meso-institutions (such as national churches), it stimulates decentralized and localised faith-based actors to engage in public space activities. For example, the retraction of state job re-training services has encouraged faith-based actors to create their own job training and socialization efforts. In an illustrative case in Chicago, although state funds were not initially available for a faith-based job training program, state institutions such as juvenile court were eager to partner with the faith-based program (J. Wilson & Banks, 2004). Similarly faith-based institutions have been drawn into job training, placement and other workforce development programs (Deb & Jones, 2003) healthcare services (Collett, Guidry, N. J. Martin, & Sager, 2006), welfare service provision and various other localised service provision (Cnaan & Newman, 2010).

## 2.5. THINKING ABOUT PLACE

The processes of secularism and neoliberalism discussed so far are social, economic and cultural processes; yet these processes are also, by their very nature spatialized, that is they must take place *somewhere*. Not only must these processes unfold in some kind of space, it is likely that they unfold in a particular *place* and are impacted by the constraints and opportunities of those places. While it may be "obvious…that all social life exists in space" (Gans, 2002) the nature of that space and its impact are somewhat less obvious and bear closer examination. Just as discussions of neoliberalism and secularism have followed disciplinary paths, so too have discussions addressing the role of space and place: sociologists have largely ignored the significance of space and place while geographers have repeatedly asserted the importance of these elements. Even within Chicago School studies of urban communities – whose methods heavily influenced this study – place did not merit close attention. On one end of the spectrum, the sociologist Herbert Gans has largely dismissed space, emphasising that it is created by social actions and is relatively unimportant, functioning as a background contextual element (2002, 2009), while on the other end of the spectrum, geographers such as Edward Soja have forcefully argued for a socio-spatial dialectic where space is as formative an element as time and social structures and processes (1980, 2010). Surprisingly – due to disciplinary partitions – these discussions often occur in parallel and separate venues, despite a not infrequent shared tendency to draw upon *urban* activities to illustrate particular interpretative stances. For example, sociological studies such as Whyte's study of a Boston slum (1943), Duneier's exploration of masculinity in a Chicago neighbourhood (1994) and Venkatesh's investigation of social networks and informal economy in a Chicago housing project (2006) are all ethnographies that offer a clear view into a particular aspect of the urban condition, yet none of these examine the role of the city, of the neighbourhood, or of place as a discrete analytical category. These studies could not have taken place and certainly would not have yielded the same conclusions if the communities and processes under study *were not urban*; that is, being place-specific, being *urban* was intrinsic to the social processes under examination.

Given the centrality of space and place to geographical thinking, space and place have been long and intensively debated within geography[2] (for example, Harvey, 2001; Massey, 1994; McDowell, 1999; Thrift, 2004, 2007). A review of these debates could consume several chapters, but for the purposes here, the most salient themes of critical geography are outlined in order to assist in situating faith-based organisations. Structural Marxists stress spatiality on a macro structural level primarily concerned with capitalist modes of production and the creation and unfolding of those modes in geographic space (see for example Castells, 1977; Harvey, 1996, 2001). Building upon this framework

[2] Scale has also been of significant concern to geographers, for a useful overview of these debates see (Marston, Jones III, & Woodward, 2005).

and drawing upon Giddens' structuration theory that asserted a mutually recursive relationship between the macro and micro (1979) as well as Lefebvre's notion of space as being created continually in everyday life (1991), Soja posited space as *equal to* social relations in its import (Soja, 1980, 2003, 2010). Extending these ideas and informed by post-colonial interrogations, Doreen Massey has contended "that space must be conceptualized integrally with time; indeed the aim should be to think always in terms of space-time" (1994, p. 2). The implications of this position are that space and place become highly localised and heterogeneous because meaning can only be derived from the interaction of physical space and social processes at a specific moment in time since social relations "are inherently dynamic. Thus even to understand space as a simultaneity is, in these terms, not to evacuate it of all inherent dynamism" (Massey, 1994, p. 2). This position is especially appealing in the study of fast changing urban environments: Massey uses the example of her own neighbourhood of Kilburn in London to illustrate the "global sense of place" that results from this dynamism. In Kilburn, residents are connected to larger world events by their identities as Muslim, Irish, Hindu and so on, all of which are displayed through objects that act as signifiers (posters, consumer goods and newspapers among others) but residents also experience Kilburn through the lens of these events, as well as more banal connections such as their proximity to central London and resulting traffic blockages. For each resident as well as each group, the meaning of Kilburn is different and may vary according to different events in time – from the micro temporality of rush hour to new 21st century spotlight on Muslims – which are also spatially grounded. For the commuter, Kilburn may be an ordinary neighbourhood that provides a shortcut to their destination; for a Muslim shopkeeper, it is a Hindu dominated area in which the trials of global Muslims are ignored; and for Irish Republicans, a viable site of anti-British activism (Massey, 1991). This is a powerful argument for examining specific social relations at a specific moment in time; because of the equivalence of social relations and of space, continually shifting social processes must by their nature impact space and the dynamic interaction between the two creates social contexts.

What do these conceptions of space and place mean for the study of faith-based organisations? Embedded as it is in the tradition of urban studies, this study takes seriously the role of place and spatiality in understanding faith-based organisations and their activities in community, *as well as* social processes and structures. Recognizing the importance of each element – the social, spatial and temporal – explains the significance of investigating faith-based organisations at this juncture. For example, if we return to the third set of research questions, each of these elements is embedded within them: why do faith-based organisations exist in contexts that are characterised as secular and modern when both secularity and modernity are often posited as inhospitable, if not antagonistic, to religion? This question emerges from an engagement with issues of secularity and modernity, social processes that assume a *temporal* progression. Secularisation is argued to lead over time to modernity; seen to be a historical movement from tradition to

modern, as discussed in greater detail in section 2.2. However, as they are not *uniform* processes, *how* they unfold varies according to *place*. Similarly, as suggested in section 2.3 when discussing neoliberalization, neoliberalism varies according to place; that is social processes that are *place-specific* effect what neoliberalization looks like and how it is rolled out. As will be shown in Chapters 4 and 5, for faith-based organisations, this means that the meaning ascribed to them is different in Rotterdam and Philadelphia because they emerge from different spatial and social contexts. Just as this study attempts to draw together the separated disciplinary strands of neoliberalism and secularism, so too does it attempt to link the sociologist's emphasis on social processes with the geographer's attention to space and place. In this way, I attempt not only to *emplace* (Gieryn, 2000) the activities of faith-based organisations, but also to demonstrate the reciprocal relationship between their activities and place.

### *2.5.1. Why neighbourhood matters*

What kind of place might effectively reveal this interaction between the macro forces of secularism and neoliberalism and ordinary life, which may tell us something about why macro forces matter to everyday social reality? Neighbourhood offers a view into all these aspects, providing a local physical place upon which global forces are inscribed and adapted (Blokland, 2003; Buck, 2001; Galster, 2001; Greif, 2009; A. Kearns & Parkinson, 2001; Massey, 1991, 1991, 1994; Meegan & Mitchell, 2001; Morrison, 2003; Murie & Musterd, 2004; Pinkster, 2009; Wellman & Leighton, 1979). While neoliberalism and secularism have much to offer in increasing our understanding of the impact of global and national changes, as much as macro national and transnational actors such as the central state, financial institutions, corporations, world bodies and so on, shape the form of most citizens' lives, for most people, the elements of daily existence take place in much more ordinary and local spheres. The boundaries between each scale are not impermeable, so each scale exists not as a bounded container that merely abuts the its spatial neighbour, rather, just as conceptions of space are fluid, so too, are those of scale: each arena flows into the other, being shaped by its own malleability and resistance to nudging from the adjacent scale(s) (Forrest & A. Kearns, 2001, p. 2127; Healey, 1998; Meegan & Mitchell, 2001). This is not a novel idea but it is one that bears emphasising. Just as an individual occupies multiple identities as a member of a nation, city, neighbourhood, cultural community, and so on, so to can too might a neighbourhood see itself as part of the city when its sports team plays against another team, a community that is home for particular players, a neglected district when its infrastructure needs are not met and a target of globalization when its industries move to other nations. The exchange and shifts between these various scales are facilitated by meso-level formulations of community, neighbourhood, and social capital.

In particular, in large urban areas, neighbourhood is the most compelling scale through which residents relate to each other, to the city and other macro scales. For

most people, the scope of their everyday world is fairly narrow, in contrast to scholarly observations that theorize "social change derived from observed macro processes of disorder, dislocation and social and economic transformation" (Meegan & Mitchell, 2001; Pinkster, 2007; Wilson, 1990). Similarly, Mann observes, "[w]e may characterise his [sic] meaningful life as being largely in an everyday level. Thus his [sic] normative connections with the vast majority of fellow citizens may be extremely tenuous" (Mann, 1970: 435 as quoted in Forrest and Kearns, 2001: 2127). This may be especially true for populations who are most vulnerable: the elderly and unemployed are most often identified as more dependent on local spheres than other residents, however, residents of areas that are distressed may be subject to greater local dependence and local boundaries as a whole (Forrest, 2008, p. 132). There may be literal physical barriers: a highway or rail tracks that make crossing boundaries difficult, this might be especially true in neighbourhoods that were subject to the urban regeneration efforts of the 1960s and 1970s or neighbourhoods that have historically been marginalised ("on the wrong side of the tracks") from the outset. Other physical barriers could include poor transportation networks and limited transportation access: most U.S. cities have limited public transit, frequently geared primarily towards white collar suburban commuters and therefore access to other parts of the city or region depend on access to and the affordability of private transportation. In addition, material barriers are opportunity and psychological obstacles: limited leisure time due to the demands of multiple jobs and child care, for example, makes the investment of time in venturing beyond walkable, familiar boundaries unattractive; further, the act of venturing beyond known boundaries requires a tolerance for vulnerability that may be unappealing to the elderly, immigrants – who may hesitate to navigate unfamiliar surroundings due to mobility, language or cultural barriers – or women, who may be concerned about safety. In all these cases, familiarity, the known, offers a powerful pull. By no means, would one suggest that the neighbourhood is impenetrably bounded, but these examples are offered to illustrate that very basic but persistent limitations can make neighbourhood not only the context, but a recurrent factor in ordinary lives.

Macro forces can provide incentive to reify local social processes and networks too. If "the reassertion of the local is part of the process of globalisation…where rootedness has an apparently new value" (Portes, 2003) asserting the local is perhaps a way of managing the distance and disempowerment that is produced by globalisation – in creating local "villages", people reduce their world to a comprehensible scale, one that they might be able to reach across and exert influence over. This brings a closer focus to the issues of social cohesion and community.

Following Forrest and Kearns' reasoning on the importance of the neighbourhood in mediating social cohesion and social capital, if social cohesion is "about getting by and getting on at the more mundane level of everyday life" then "it is the neighbourhood which is likely to be the site for many of these mundane routines and for…ongoing 'repair

work' and 'normalisation' " (Forrest and Kearns, 2001: 2127). Social cohesion offers an emphasis on

> the need for a shared sense of morality and common purpose; aspects of social control and social order; the threat to social solidarity of income and wealth inequalities between people, groups and places; the level of social interaction within communities or families; and a sense of belonging to place. By implication, a society lacking cohesion would be one which displayed social disorder and conflict, disparate moral values, extreme social inequality, low levels of social interaction between and within communities and low levels of place attachment.
>
> *(Forrest and Kearns, 2001: 2128)*

There are negative attributes of social cohesion – in extreme this is illustrated by the case of gated communities that show strong internal cohesion and an attendant resistance to those outside the community – those outside usually include the poor as well as the state. There are of course, other instances of social cohesion as an unhelpful force, but if we take neighbourliness, a sense of safety, and of place as necessary to social order and comfort, then we can proceed with the assumption that at least a slight degree of social cohesion is desirable. Further, scholars such as Robert Putnam have built upon assumptions that social cohesion leads to the development of social capital, which they argue, brings a new set of benefits.

## 2.6. THE UTILITY OF SOCIAL CAPITAL

Now that we have reviewed the grand theories that provide the background context and macro explanation for *why* faith-based organisations have drawn renewed attention and experienced shifting roles, we must turn to the middle-range theories that help explain *what* they do as putatively transformed actors. As noted in section 2.1.1 middle-range theories assist in linking data to grand theory by discerning patterns and theoretical trends in the data, taking the data into the first level of abstraction. Previous studies have highlighted social capital creation as an important element in the activities of faith-influenced organisations (Cnaan & Boddie, 2002; Davelaar, van den Toorn, de Witte, Beaumont, & Kuiper, 2011; Greeley, 1997; Hefferan, Adkins, & Occhipinti, 2009; Monsma, 2000; de Souza Briggs, 1997; Unruh & Sider, 2005a; Winkler, 2008). Given that earlier work has identified social capital as significant, in order to effectively consider the third set of research questions that concern the scope and activities of faith-based organisations (see 1.1.3), it is necessary to better understand social capital. This section will explore social capital, reviewing its positive potential and its criticisms; this lays the groundwork for the analysis of the data in Chapter 6.

For well over a decade now, social capital has been in vogue as a conceptual tool for academics and policy makers in attempting to understand how bonds between ordinary

people, in ordinary circumstances are created and used to link them to each other to create a collective unit: a group, a neighbourhood, a community (Butler & Robson, 2001; Etzioni, 1996; Kleinhans, Priemus, & Engbersen, 2007; Marquez & Perez, 2008; Middleton, Murie, & Groves, 2005; Putnam et al., 2004). Social capital is an especially useful tool for this study because it helps make sense of what faith-based organisations assist in creating between people and groups when they interact in particular ways. The value of these interactions cannot be measured through market means of currency and monetary exchange (Putnam, 1995, 2000). Despite this something of value emerges from these interactions and is created from the bottom up, in a way that is not market driven and therefore social capital offers a suitable mechanism through which to understand this phenomenon. As some scholars have struggled to define social capital, others have seized upon social capital as a corrective to approaches that emphasise economic and macro political actors. For these scholars, "social capital" has been read literally, with an emphasis on the social and in this way has been drawn upon to insert individuals as *human* actors and most often as *small scale*, *local* actors. There is also a pragmatic element to this reading: given the Third Way's amenability to the language of the market, "capital" holds some appeal, moreover, it implies that it is something that can be built and accumulated – that is, a tool towards making a particular goal achievable.

The understanding of social capital in this way – as a glue that binds individuals – has been most championed by Robert Putnam (1995, 2000). Putnam suggested that social capital not only binds individuals, but that the existence of this capital promotes collective well-being so that a group that is rich in social capital is also healthy and sustainable. He defines social capital as emerging from trustworthiness, social connectedness and dense social networks. Although sociologists have long held that social networks lead to connectedness and trustworthiness, he views social capital as a kind of social network theory with the additions of the elements of "bridging" and "bonding" (1985) and therefore as an improvement on earlier social network theorising. While he acknowledges that Pierre Bourdieu's (1988) and James S. Coleman's (Bourdieu, 1985; Portes, 2000, 2003) formative contributions to the idea of social capital, Putnam does not spend much time acknowledging the differences between these conceptions and his own. For example, he cursorily mentions these alternate constructions without noting that Bourdieu's conception is dependent on classical Marxist analysis of power structures and processes and therefore, *class* becomes significant in the Bourdieusian construction of social capital. This difference means that in Bourdieusian terms, social capital is frequently a resource that is available to very few and is highly dependent on class stratification and status (Mayer, 2003; Middleton et al., 2005). This differentiates Putnam's social capital, which owes a debt to Coleman, who offered a broader view than Bourdieu, highlighting the value of *collective* resources; Putnam extends this to almost any collective, any community. Further, Putnam links social capital to economic development, asserting that communities with a high level of social capital – especially bridging capital – are economically healthy

communities. It follows then, that communities that are struggling economically may find a way out of economic distress by developing social capital.

### *2.6.1. Critiques of social capital*

Putnam's social capital has provided an appealing tool for those who seek solutions for economically distress and social fragmentation – policy makers and academics alike – but the disarming simplicity of Putnamian social capital also contains significant shortcomings. The idea has been criticised primarily along three axes: first, on questions of definition – that is, the lack of clarity about the nature of social capital (DeFilippis, 2001; Westlund, 2006); second, on the relationship between social capital and economic development (Blokland & Rae, 2008; Blokland & Savage, 2008; Marquez & Perez, 2008; Portes & Landolt, 1996); and finally, on the exclusionary potential of social capital (Middleton et al., 2005).

From Coleman's introduction to Putnam's popularization, "social capital" was transformed into a more normative phrase becoming linked, positively, to community, trust and reciprocity, and civic and democratic engagement. This transformation caused a gain in normative weight, but not in precision and it "reduce[d]…`the social', i.e. something non-economic, into (a form of) capital, and social relations into *context-independent* causal relations" (Mayer, 2003: 112, my emphasis). The impetus for this context-independence is twofold: first, it satisfies scholarly theoretical imperatives that require such a high degree of abstraction so as to allow the term to be included in theoretical modelling; and a second, related imperative is to abstract for the purpose of comparability. That is, if an idea is stripped of contextual nuance, it can be applied to many different contexts with the hope of evaluation of each context against the theoretical model. This is, of course, one of the goals of the scholarly project, however, "social capital" suggests some of the dangers of too much abstraction: can the "social capital" of one country (or context) be the same or thought of in the same terms as of another? Can we talk of the social capital of a U.S suburb in the same way as that of a Nigerian village? This need for a theoretical universality and meta-abstraction is in part responsible for the continuing imprecision of the term. Perhaps the sharpest criticism of social capital is that it is definitionally circular: "Cause, function and consequences are conflated in a circular argument" where "[t]his tautological use of the term as both explanation and object being explained reappears in many of the studies applying the concept" (Mayer, 2003: 113). In turn, this definitional vagueness results in "discussion…based upon assertion rather than upon evidence" (Mayer, 2003; Pawar, 2006).

Not only does social capital lack clarity of definition, but the phrase itself carries with it the lens of economic value and benefit that reveal a concern with the market, capital and economic value so that the labelling of "civic resources…as a form of capital" inevitably draws the notion into dynamics of economic models and activity (Mayer, 2003: 111). Similarly, Manohar Pawar has argued that the term tends to hide policy decisions that benefit holders of capital; using discourse analysis, he posits that "social" and "capital" are words

in opposition to each other where capital is individualistic, "concentrated in the hands of a few" (Pawar, 2006: 218), typically generated exploitatively, and producing "discriminatory and divisive effects in communities" (Pawar, 2006: 219). In contrast, he suggests that the "social" is inclusive and collective with a "tendency to multiply and spread" (Pawar, 2006: 219), it "militates against exploitation" and works "against the capital prosperity of the few and the subordination of the majority" (Pawar, 2006: 220). Social capital in this view, might be seen as an oxymoron. At best, it

> priotiz[es] specific forms of civic engagement (while neglecting others), it filters the contemporary reconfigurations in the relationship of civil society, state and market in a peculiar way, which is conducive to supporting the spread of market forces in areas so far beyond the reach of capital"
>
> *(Mayer, 2003: 111).*

These critiques derive in part from classical Marxist understandings of the (negative) entwinement of power and capital and suggest that the notion of social capital is placed in service to powerful capital(ism). Therefore civil society as it is conceived within the social capital discourse is a cushion that absorbs the flaws in the market-driven capitalist systems: that is, where unameliorated capitalism might result in marginalized, poor, homeless, and perhaps most importantly of all, *restless and angry* populations, third sector actors act as the balm that soothes – but does not heal – the wounds of the market (cf. Wolch, 2001). In the alternative, these marginalized groups would coalesce expressing their collective anger and protest, and the resultant conflict would elicit radical changes that address the problematic structural conditions. While it is difficult to disagree that the structural conditions that marginalize the already distressed – the poor, unemployed and so on – are not held sufficiently responsible for the fragmentation and losses that they create, it does seem unlikely that ignoring the short-term needs of the distressed in favour of fermenting foment is a preferable option. Mayer suggests that instead of recognizing that systemic change is out of their individualized hands, the marginalized are subject to myths of individual engagement that will transform their circumstances. This framing suggests first, that their circumstances are of their own creation and therefore can be undone individually, and secondly, hides the flaws of the structures and institutions that are responsible for the circumstances of marginalization thereby removing any incentive that might exist for the marginalized (and others) to become engaged in more radical structural change.

A related critique from this perspective is that even when change is promoted, the kind of change favoured by champions of social capital is incremental and cumulative rather than revolutionary and radical. In accepting existing institutions, social capital resigns itself to what already exists rather than radical change that is normative and prescriptive. In other words, social capital is a preserver of the status quo. This role is linked to the market

because "the interest behind this awareness [of social capital] is, of course, in enhanced economic performance" (Mayer, 2001: 114). Implicitly, the market and market drives for growth provide the structural underpinnings of the interest in and support for social capital, and this link to the market means that social capital becomes an instrument of the economic and political status quo and the elites who benefit from the status quo so that conversely, social capital does not benefit the marginalised (Mayer, 2001). This argument has a hint of the polemical to it, in its crisp bifurcation of approaches as pro- or anti-status quo and often lacks specificity and locality which might reveal that such a bifurcation is not as crisp as suggested and that social capital may indeed offer a grey zone between status quo and revolution.

The malleability of the concept of social capital is illustrated in criticisms that decry it as too economically focussed (DeFilippis, 2001; Westlund, 2006) and those that suggest that it is insufficiently tied to the economic value or that it should be more emphatically tied to the economic (Lelieveldt, 2004; de Souza Briggs, 1997). There are clearly two roles for the concept: as a theoretical tool subject to scholarly debate and dissection; and as a policy tool that facilitates community development and social transformation. These two roles cannot be exclusive, yet for scholars who view the monetizing of social interactions as problematic, the emphasis on capital and economic transformation devalues the humanity of social life. For policy makers, it is precisely the promise of economic change – if it is in the direction of economic regeneration – that facilitates the improvement of everyday life in marginalized communities (Putnam, 2000).

The final set of criticisms levelled at social capital stem from its potential to further social exclusion rather than to facilitate cross-cutting, integrative social cohesion. Putnam acknowledges this as "the dark side of social capital" (Blokland & Savage, 2008) produced by particular kinds of bonding capital based in homogenous groups and one that breeds intolerance. While Putnam views this as a side effect, others have suggested that it is central to social capital; that is, that the very nature of social capital is that it is exclusionary, rather than a force creating connection across difference and producing meaningful social cohesion in diverse societies (Bennett, 2008; Etzioni, 1996, 1998; Putnam, 2000). The view of exclusion as being central to social capital takes bonding capital as its point of departure, often ignoring the possibility of bridging capital. Critics who take this perspective point to the embrace of social capital by neo-communitarians and Putnam's own neo-communitarianism (DeFilippis, 2001, p. 790). While it is important to recognize social capital's very real potential for exclusionary bonding, as evidenced by voluntary associations, gated communities and so on, that are strongly homogeneous along at least one axis, it would be a mistake to throw the baby out with the bathwater by ignoring the equal potential of bridging capital.

In particular, as the gap between the rich and the poor increase, the links between the two ends of society become more tenuous and it is in this space that bridging institutions become especially valuable. Although one may concur with DeFillipis that

"[w]hat really needs to change are those power relations" even DeFillipis acknowledges that when "a community's residents are poor and therefore on the losing end of a set of power relations" bridging capital is especially valuable (2001). The fascination with social capital implicitly recognizes the need for these links which can lead to improved social cohesion *across* differences of income, status, ethnicity, etc. Institutions such as faith-based organisations and churches may be of particular value in providing spaces of bridging social capital and cohesion. In considering the possibilities of bridging activity where the interests of the marginalized become linked with the interests of the privileged, these critiques sometimes appear antithetical to social cohesion in general because these links are precisely those that undermine social change. In contrast, if we consider bridging activities as a means of connecting heterogeneous individuals and groups, creating stability, opportunity, and connectedness – in short, significant aspects of social cohesion – it becomes desirable to find solutions that allow for social cohesion, but also allow for raising the consciousness of *both* parties, the marginalized and the privileged.

### *2.6.2. Modifying social capital*

In the previous section some critiques of Putnam's conceptualisation of social capital were reviewed. The term holds both the idea of the social and the economic and his construction of social capital as encompassing trustworthiness, social connectedness and dense social networks and ultimately resulting in civic engagement has been critiqued on each of these elements. On the one hand, it has been characterized as simplistic because of implied linearity that culminates in economic development (Blokland & Savage, 2008; Marquez & Perez, 2008) and on the other as oriented towards exclusionary neo-communitarianism (Chaves, 2001; Cnaan & Boddie, 2002; S. S. Kennedy, 2003). Despite these valid criticisms, much of value can be found in the concept of social capital, especially if coupled with approaches that address these weaknesses in particular. For studies of community and at the local scale, the latter – that social capital is about an exclusionary, neo-communitarian turn – is perhaps the most damning claim. If this is in fact the case, social capital has little to offer poorer people in marginalized neighbourhoods. However, I contend that social capital *does not have to be* solely bonding and neither does it have to create exclusionary neo-communitarian communities. As will be seen later, faith-based organisations have been well positioned to act as sites of social capital creation. The sites they provide offer religious homogeneity that allows for the co-existence of various national, ethnic and other kinds of heterogeneity. In this sense social capital helps us understand the process of community creation, while suggesting its potential.

## 2.7. WHAT DOES "FAITH-BASED" MEAN?

The term "faith-based organisation" is a relatively new one; a word frequency search using Google Books shows the term appeared in common use beginning in the early

1990s[3], peaking between 2000 and 2005. This pattern reflects the term's linkage to the Charitable Choice provision of the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996 in the U.S. and the subsequent rise of interest in faith-based organisations in the U.S. The Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act was a significant welfare reform act, altering many aspects of the U.S. welfare provision system. The Charitable Choice provision eased previous restrictions that were designed to separate church and state; the provision allowed organisations to retain religious markings and other indicators even while they provided social services for which they received government funding (Cnaan & Boddie, 2002; S. S. Kennedy, 2003). This move to facilitate the involvement of religious organisations was predicated on the notion that faith-based actors would be more efficient and effective than secular or government agencies driven largely by an American belief in religion and a concomitant suspicion of government as well as the secular (2005).

Legislative change accounted for the sudden interest in faith-based organisations in the U.S., in Western Europe and in other post-industrial democracies, other motivations were at play. In the wake of attacks by various Islamic fundamentalists, some of these countries recognised that their own citizens were involved in perpetrating these attacks and that these citizens were the descendants of immigrants who were re-connecting to the religion of their parents via fundamentalist interpretations. Differences between these citizens who were descendants of immigrants and the non-immigrant derived population began to be characterised through the lens of religion. As Modood has noted, attention shifted from identities based national origin and ethnicity to simply ones delineated by religion, typically this meant "Muslim" (2002). However, while Muslims have been problematized through increasing specific state attention, in post-industrial democracies where there is some impetus to separate religion and state, legislatively and regulatorily, it is "religion" and "faith" that has been reified, rather than a specific faith tradition. In other words, the attention drawn to Muslims in post-industrial societies has resulted in openings for *all* faith traditions.

In light of all this, what then does the term "faith-based organisation" mean? The term covers a wide range of organisational types, from congregations whose primary and often sole purpose is to provide spaces for acts of worship and to facilitate worship to social service providers who might provide job assistance, rehabilitation services, medical services and so on, all of which might seem indistinguishable from those provided by secular actors. Chaves offers three broad categories into which faith-based organisations can be sorted: congregations, denominational organisations, and non-profit organisations (2002).

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[3] This is based on the Google Ngram which searches through the body of books digitized by Google. Of course, this is by no means definitive, but the Google repository is vast enough to give a useful indication. The search can be found at: http://ngrams.googlelabs.com/graph?content=faith+based+organisations&year_start=1800&year_end=2008&corpus=0&smoothing=1.

The middle category generally covers the administrative offices that run congregations – diocesan offices, for example – and as the bureaucratic arm of religious denominations, it is of little interest to this study. Chaves' last category, non-profit organisations is so broad that it includes organisations that are highly structured and well-integrated into the state sanctioned social service provision sector such as the Salvation Army, as well as grassroots, more informal neighbourhood faith-derived community development associations. To be useful, this broad category of religious non-profits must be further refined. And of course, in this study, the role of space and place are significant elements that must be considered.

## 2.8. CONCLUSION

In this chapter, the theoretical considerations that inform this investigation of faith-based organisations have been reviewed. The processes of secularism and neoliberalism provide a lens through which the question of why faith-based organisations persist in secular societies can be examined. Previous research that has highlighted the role of social capital suggests that social capital offers an explanatory mechanism through which we can understand the meaning and outcomes of the activities of faith-based organisations. In reflecting on the role of place, the salience of the local and spatial dimensions of the organisations is forefronted. The development and success of Internet communities heralding technology as surmounting physicality has drawn some scholars into a habit of disregarding place, yet simply because *some* communities operate in a translocal or putatively placeless manner, it does not follow that place no longer matters. As we will see in Chapters 4 and 5, the salience of place persists and is perhaps even reified for low income and socially marginalized populations; these chapters tell the story of the faith-based organisations examined; the meanings and ramifications of there are reflected upon in Chapter 6.

# 3 METHODOLOGY

## 3.1. INTRODUCTION

As discussed at greater length in the previous chapter, the central issue of this study is the convergence of neoliberalism and secularism as expressed through faith-based organisations (FBOs). In order to understand how these two elements converge, we need to better understand *what* FBOs do, *how* they do it and *why*. In other words, why do religious organisations persist in two countries in which the mainstream views on religion are quite divergent: where in the U.S., much of the population considers religious adherence to be highly positive and desirable, while in the Netherlands, public discourse frames the country as highly secular and religious adherence is considered neutral at best and in many quarters thought to be undesirable. Approaching these questions solely from a policy or institutional perspective – for example, ascertaining that a certain number of FBOs receive government funding or that a certain percentage of all non-profit organisations in a city are faith-based – provides only half the picture, leaving the questions of *why* and *how*, unanswered. Qualitative research methods provide the most suitable route to gaining a view into the FBOs to answer these questions and to that end, the methods of observation, interviews and document analysis were employed; each of these methods will be discussed at greater length later in this chapter.

A qualitative approach was selected not only because it offers the benefits of descriptive mechanisms to understand processes, but also because many qualitative approaches acknowledge the power inherent in the subjectivizing gaze of the researcher (Said, 1979). While Marxist scholars drew attention to the ignored power differentials inherent in class and economic status (for example, Castells, 1979; Harvey, 1978; Massey, 1995; Ortner,

1998; Smith, 1979), feminist and postcolonial scholars (for example, Derickson, 2009; McFarlane, 2006; Mullings, 1999; Raghuram & Madge, 2006; Rose, 1997) have proffered an expanded lens through which to consider issues of power. Although many are inclined to view feminist work as solely concerned with women – and at its outer limits, perhaps with gender – and similarly, view postcolonial research as occupied with the subaltern, literally seen as the subject, *post*-colonization, each of these epistemological frames suggests first, an interrogation of subject identities that extends beyond class, and second, prompts researcher sensitivity to power differentials and exchanges before, during and after the research process. These perspectives remind us that the processes of constituting knowledge, like other social processes, inevitably express particular power positions and they further remind us, that power and agency are inscribed in social processes in *multiple* ways.

With an awareness of these complexities, how then as a researcher, is one to develop rigorous scholarship while paying sufficient attention to the exercise of power and to the sometimes unavoidable subject positions of those whom we seek to understand? In this study, this awareness was operationalized by maintaining the stance of a *reflexive* researcher (Rose, 1997; Cloke et al., 2000) and by using the techniques of grounded theory, therefore placing the respondents at the centre of the research process and of theory development. In this chapter, I will first reflect, in the mode of the reflexive researcher, on the issues of ethics and positionality that arose during the course of the project; next, I will consider the selection and suitability of grounded theory techniques for the research study; third, I will review the criteria and process for selecting the cities under consideration; and finally, I will discuss the specific methods used to gather, manage and code the data.

## 3.2. ENGAGING AS A REFLEXIVE RESEARCHER

Inspired by feminism's cautions to pay particular attention to those who are marginalised and postcolonialism's notes on the privileged gaze, I view reflexive research as being comprised of two parts: first, the formal ethical considerations expressed succinctly through many institutional codes and second, the researcher's reflections on positionality, that acknowledges the researcher as a research instrument with his or her own attributes as an actor in the field of observation. In the next two sections, I will review how formal ethical guidelines were applied and reflect on my role as the instrument of data collection.

### *3.2.1. Ethical considerations*

Many social science research associations have codes of ethics that uniformly provide four basic guidelines: informed consent, transparency – that is, the avoidance of deception – privacy and confidentiality, and accuracy (Christians, 2005; Kitchin and Tate, 2000)[1].

[1] For examples, see the American Sociological Association, *Code of Ethics*, www.asanet.org/galleries/default-file/Code%20of%20Ethics.pdf; the British Sociological Association *Statement*

The guidelines are designed to prevent harm to those who are being researched, and to allow participants to share information with researchers without fear of repercussions or ill-use. They are a small step in redressing the power imbalance between the researcher and informants.

In the scope of this research project, it became clear that while there are broadly applicable ethical and trust considerations, each issue is operationalised differently for those actors who are individuals *qua* individuals rather than individuals as organisational agents: the latter represent an organisation and are therefore extensions of it, rather than singular, free agents. For individuals, the central issues are consent and transparency, along with trust; in contrast, broader issues of public reputation become central to interactions with individuals as organisational protectors.

The issue of consent for the methods of interviews and document analysis was straightforward since participants could choose whether to be interviewed or not and whether to share documents or not. However, consent was less obviously resolved when using participant observation as a data gathering method. In public places, where there was little or no expectation of privacy, consent was not needed and would have been impractical to obtain; however, in situations where behaviour and interactions were observed in a more bounded environment – an office or community centre, for example – the question of harm became more salient.

It is here that the intertwining of consent, privacy and confidentiality was especially relevant. Explicit consent is most important where harm can be done to the participants; in this study, because the participants were not *subjects* – that is, they were not acted *upon* – harm would most likely ensue from the researcher gleaning (and using) private or confidential information. To accommodate the complexities of my own positionality and the subject positions of my respondents, critical reflexivity was adopted as the guiding ethical principle (Rose, 1997; Cloke et. al, 2000; Dowling, 2005). Under this rubric, resolving the tension between respecting the rights of participants (consent) and the unobtrusiveness necessary to observe ordinary interactions, was done by determining first, whether the information conveyed was truly unique to the individual and can identify them, and second, by inserting awareness of the researcher as an institutional agent casually and without disruption. Where the latter was possible, the presence of the researcher, *qua* research agent was made known. Critical reflexivity allows for the researcher to address issues of ethics dynamically, while doing so in a structured and systematic manner. As part of this practice, a research diary was maintained, using the strategies of reflexive positionality and autoethnography (Rose, 1997; Cloke et. al., 2000).

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*of Ethical Practice for the British Sociological Association*, www.britsoc.co.uk/equality/Statement+Ethical+Practice.htm; American Anthropological Association, *Code of Ethics*, www.aaanet.org/committees/ethics/ethicscode.pdf; and the American Political Science Association's, *A Guide to Professional Ethics in Political Science*, www.apsanet.org/imgtest/ethicsguideweb.pdf.

An additional layer of reflexivity that preserves the rights of the researched and can act to mitigate the power of the researcher is active transparency. Active transparency meant being open about the research topic and approaches, sharing the information in language that made sense to the inquirer (as opposed to technical or academic jargon laden terms) and when asked, preliminary research findings were presented to interested informants, such as congregation members.

Anonymity was offered in various forms: pseudonyms are used for informants and data that might easily identify an individual is removed. Where a data source could be easily identified, I have aggregated the data with other respondents; for example, interviews and observations provided by the minister of a congregation is placed with information provided by others in the leadership of that congregation so that congregational leadership becomes an aggregate voice. This allowed ministers and leaders to speak more freely and share insights that they would not ordinarily. The issue of whether to identify the organisations in question proved to be challenging; ultimately, it was decided that if an organisation made information about their activities publicly available – on a public web site, for example – their real names would be used. Respondents were informed about the parameters of confidentiality and privacy and in cases and for most, these parameters were reassuring.

### *3.2.2. "Do you think we're crazy?": Negotiating religion*

In any qualitative study, the researcher is the primary instrument of data gathering and as such, it is worth exploring the position and role of the researcher vis-à-vis his or her informants. In this study, the researcher's relationship to faith and religion were of particular importance to the study's informants. This is in part, because faith beliefs are considered to be deeply personal and are thought to reflect some fundamental essence of a person, and in part, because adherents were acutely aware of the polarized positions of "secular" and "religious".

In both, the Netherlands and the U.S., religious adherents tend to cast themselves as being outside the mainstream and often view their adherence and belief as being under fire from a secular mainstream. Regardless of whether this is actually the case, religious adherents were often suspicious of those who they perceived to be examining them from a non-religious perspective. This tendency was more pronounced in groups that saw themselves as persecuted and marginalized by the mainstream. For most Christian groups, encountering the researcher over time and seeing the researcher participate in church activities mitigated fears and suspicions; for many Muslim informants, however, suspicion persisted. Muslims in both cities were likely to have a general sense of being under siege and a deep awareness of being viewed as a "problem" population nationally and globally.

In the Philadelphia Muslim community in this study, informants, in various ways, often requested validation of their religious belief. In one instance, while attending an informal gathering for women, an attendee asked me to explain why I was interested in their community as I was offering a view into my research interests, she interrupted and asked,

"Do you think we're crazy?" This was an utterly unexpected question. Although I am not a faith adherent, and perhaps even because of this lack of faith, I view religions fairly equally: that is, while I recognise the variation of beliefs and practises between religions, I view them simply as different ways of viewing and interpreting the world. In this rubric then, and in a general sense, to me the adherent of one religion is neither more or less sane, coherent, and so on. as that of another religion or denomination. Clearly, this is not the case for adherents who often believe that their religious views are more true that other religious views. The interaction prompted by this question was fraught: explaining my views on the equal weight of religions would cast me clearly as a non-believer and an outsider in a manner that would undermine my credibility and access to the group; equally, my first reaction of surprise at what seemed at the outset an absurd question, also had to be curtailed, for it would appear dismissive.

An encounter such as this exemplifies the strains of being the research instrument; each response and interaction is an important link in the chain of credibility and trust that eventually leads to access. As I was well aware of all of these elements, drawing on Erving Goffman's (1967/2005) exegesis on micro-interactions, I was able to rapidly manage my facial expression and decide to answer the question literally, and I responded that I did not think that the informants were "crazy". These decisions held me in good stead, as the response satisfied the questioner and the conversation continued, even perhaps with a new level of trust established. Similarly, other members of this community sought validation by urging me to convert to Islam. These were arduous interactions where community members would bring intense focus to an encounter, conveying insistent concern for one's soul, ethical being, afterlife and so on, while intermingling theological belief with community information. The combination of information conveyed during these encounters was vital for this research project and so it was especially important to project a stance of openness, keeping at the forefront of one's mind, one's role as a researcher, not a disinterested person who might engage in a personal discussion of faith and belief. Engaging as a researcher while preserving a hidden personal self is a challenge peculiar to being a non-religious person among religious people.

So in societies where religious belief and adherence are often positioned in opposition to secularism, individuals are expected to "take a side" and an additional dichotomy that sometimes arises is the positioning of intellectuals as secular and opposed to the religious. Both these positions converge in a suspicion of the researcher's motives regarding the religious and faith components of research. There was then, some expectation that I declare a religious allegiance which would allay fears that the research goal was to undermine and criticise both religion and religious activity. While a declaration of personal religious or secular adherence was avoided, this reticence likely made clear to informants that I am not a member of a religious or faith community. Instead, sympathy and empathy to adherents was emphasised verbally, but also demonstrated by attending worship services and participating in a respectful manner.

### 3.2.3. Other positionalities

Although religious belief was a primary point of focus for informants, other aspects, specifically connection to place and gender also proved salient. The role of place in gaining effective access to the groups under study and establishing productive rapport with informants was highlighted during the pilot study, but continued to be an important element in the research encounters. Informants wanted to be able to position the researcher in relation to their own religion but also in relation to their own city and neighbourhood. In Rotterdam, my connection to place was sporadic: I did not live in Rotterdam full-time, rather I would spend one or two weeks there each month over a period of several month. Since I was unable to assert that I lived in Rotterdam, informants sometimes expressed disappointment that I was not a city resident. I attempted to mitigate this disappointment by establishing that I had resident (insider) knowledge, displaying whenever possible, detailed knowledge about city neighbourhoods and about local stakeholders and activities. Mentioning my contact with key stakeholders seemed especially reassuring to informants, perhaps indicating to them that I had been vetted by the appropriate gatekeepers regardless of my lack of residence in the city.

In Philadelphia, informants became disengaged, offering more superficial information once they realised I was based outside the country, recognising this, I began to downplay my Dutch university affiliation and emphasise my connection to the neighbourhood. I lived in Philadelphia for eight months, choosing to live in or adjacent to the neighbourhoods that the FBOs were located; for the first half of my stay, I lived in West Philadelphia and for the second, in Germantown. For the FBOs located in West Philadelphia, mentioning my West Philadelphia location immediately cemented me as part of the neighbourhood; I lived within walking distance of both West Philadelphia FBOs and spent most of my leisure time in the neighbourhood as well. As a consequence, I would frequently see members of the faith-based communities I was investigating and perhaps *more importantly*, I was seen *by them*; being greeted on the street or from a passing car reinforced the value of living in the neighbourhood and being known as a fellow resident. For the second half of the research period, I lived in Germantown adjacent to the North Philadelphia neighbourhoods in which the other FBOs were located. Germantown's reputation as poor, prone to crime, in other as "rough" as North Philadelphia assisted my credibility with North Philadelphia residents: on more than one occasion, the tone of an informant's engagement was altered when my residential location was revealed. This shift was in recognition that my neighbourhood life-world was similar to theirs; in other words, I was not a researcher who lived in one of the safer, more expensive neighbourhoods that abutted the universities, but I was someone who could understand the daily challenges of being surrounded by poverty, crime and drug use – my context was one that perhaps meant I could relate better to theirs.

As a woman, my access to spaces designated as male was restricted. In the Muslim communities, for example, there was often reluctance from women and men, to allow

me to conduct interviews with male community members. In the Philadelphia Muslim community in this study, interviews with men were always in the public spaces of the *masjid*, at the suggestion of the men being interviewed, but also at the suggestion of the female gatekeepers. In effect, this restricted informal observation and communication in male- or male-dominated only events and because the interviews were in earshot of others, the men interviewed were likely to divulge less public information. Further, in comparing my experience with that of a male researcher who had peripheral encounters with this community (Coleman, personal communication), it was evident that these spatial and access restrictions were prompted by gender. Similarly, I did not attend men's groups in the Christian communities under study, but in contrast, I often had private conversations in private spaces with men, and attention was paid more often to my role as a researcher, rather than my gender. However, being a woman also allowed for access to spaces that are barred to male researchers and to modes of establishing rapport open only to women. The association of womanhood and the maternal is persistent. This provided many entry points into conversation and interaction with women; when children were present, offering to hold a child and engaging with the mother and other women about various aspects of parenthood permitted blending into the group and I often found women more willing to speak of personal experience and ideas when an infant was on my lap.

## 3.3. MAKING SENSE OF DATA USING GROUNDED THEORY

Having considered reflexivity as an important intervention within the power relationship between researcher and those who are researched, we now turn to the grounded theory as the second tool in this intervention. Much social science depends on the positivist model of inquiry to frame research; however, in taking a feminist and postcolonialist informed perspective of inquiry, it becomes important to foreground those who are being researched, permitting informants to speak for themselves and to have a voice in how their case is situated in the larger discourses of neoliberalism and secularism (Charmaz 2005; Dyck 2005). Grounded theory provides a useful channel through which this can be achieved.

In contrast to positivist models of inquiry that assert a hypothesis and then set out to prove or disprove it (Creswell, 2002), grounded theory provides immediate opportunity for theory development emphasising the reflective researcher and the role of interpretation and offering a mechanism that matches the fuzziness of social reality with flexibility. The strength of grounded theory lies in its abstracting of "subjective experience…into theoretical statements" about social reality and "relations between actors" provides the opportunity for new theory development, recognition of causal patterns in the cases under study and better understandings of particular social realities (Suddaby, 2006: 635). The technique of *constant comparison* forms the foundation of grounded theory's iterative process: so that the "critical evaluation of emerging constructs against ongoing

observations" (Suddaby, 2006: 636) allows for the researcher to change the direction of data gathering (altering questions, sites or types of observation) based on the analytical results of constant comparison. I draw upon Glaser and Strauss's (2006) conceptual framework: so this research focuses on the creation of new knowledge rather than hypothesis testing, and that theory is developed based on the data; that is, the analysis of the data creates a link between the empirical study and theoretical debates in the field.

### *3.3.1. From data to theory*

Glaser and Strauss originally suggested grounded theory as a way to avoid positivist hypothesis-testing modes of research which they asserted produced no new knowledge. For Glaser and Strauss, grounded theory offered a mechanism through which to produce knowledge that was persistent – that lasted beyond the immediate empirical problem under review, that added to existing theoretical and other knowledge systems – and that essentially provided a link between high level theory and empirical data. The advantage of their approach was twofold: first, new knowledge would be created, and secondly, and obviously, relatedly, new theory would emerge *from* data. This reversed positivist top-down research and suggested that data could provoke new theory. This view offers motivation and incentive to the researcher of a new project, promising an ability to provide useful contributions to theoretical debates in one's field. I will use grounded theory then to create data-generated theory by using iterative and closely connected processes: minimizing the separation of the processes of collecting, analyzing and interpreting data attempting to have these processes take place as close together as possible, so that theory can be generated in a way that makes sense – i.e. that reflects the data, and is iterative (Figure 3.1).

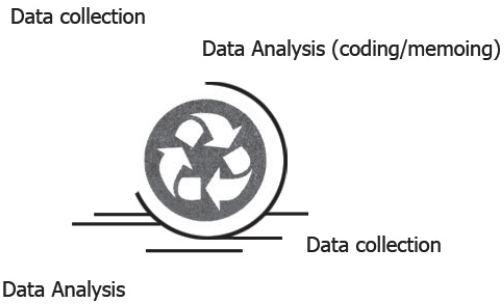


**Figure 3.1.** From Hesse-Biber, 2007: 322

In studying faith-based organisations and their role in shaping neighbourhoods and residents' understandings of their own urban citizenship, I am interested in both the observable exchanges and conveyance of information and in how these realities are

understood by both the purveyors and recipients. The rich detail of everyday life elicited by the ethnographic technique of observation allows for a view into observable social reality while interviews and documents reveal actors' constructions of their own worlds, social interaction and social experience (Peet, 1998; Suddaby, 2006). Both these aspects: observable social reality and subjective constructions are necessary elements. Grounded theory provides a structure through which information about the observable social reality and specifically on the "social situation under examination" (Suddaby, 2006: 635) can be collected and understood. In this way, grounded theory provides the framework for collecting implicit data – that is knowledge that may not be articulated by the actors, and that may in fact not be known by them – and the actors' explicit voice and combining the two to develop theory and better understand the social reality being studied.

## 3.4. CASE STUDY AND COMPARISON AS RESEARCH STRATEGY

Case studies have been a common research strategy in the social sciences (Flybjerg, 2006; Kawulich, 2005) as they are particularly effective when investigating a phenomenon within its context, and "especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident" (Yin, 1981: 56). Since controlled experimentation usually cannot be established in the study of social life, yet it is important to understand both the specific instance (the case) and the context, case study strategies have proved invaluable. In this section, I will review why the case study strategy was appropriate for the research questions in this project and how the cases were selected to ensure that the research process would evince useful data.

At its most basic level, this project asks, how is it that in two national systems that are so different, faith-based organisations that seem to be similar, exist in urban centres? This question is suited to the case comparison approach because in order to answer it, we need to understand what it is that faith-based organisations do in each city and why; understanding what they do helps explain why they exist. This is "differentiating comparative analysis with plural causation" (Pickvance, 2001: 23) where observed similarities are explained through the process of understanding how variation in causality may result in similar end points (Abu-Lughod, 2007). The purpose of this comparative approach is not to generate "law-like social theory", but rather to emphasise an "interpretive social science" (Flyvbjerg, 2006; Nijman, 2007) that provides information that is context-dependent and offers a view via "thick" description into the communities that are marginalized and often ignored in comparative studies (Abu-Lughod, 2007). In this way, case studies do not produce correlational relationships or "validate" a hypothesis in the manner of quantitative research, rather case studies allow for opportunities to understand "causal heterogeneity" – that is, the varying circumstances that can produce similar outcomes (Denters and Mossberger, 2005; Ragin, 1997). The focus of this strategy is the identification of patterns, and the use of "deep analysis" to develop theory (Fine

and Weis, 2005: 66; Stake, 2005). The case study strategy fits well into a grounded theory methodological framework: like grounded theory, the first layer of the case is detailed data compiled from observation, ethnography or other data collection techniques creating a rich base; from this base, emerges categories which are then abstracted into theory[2] (Castree, 2005; Ragin, 1997; Snyder, 2001; Stake, 2005).

### *3.4.1. Selecting the cities*

Comparative studies, unlike large-N studies, do not depend on randomization; rather, careful case selection is more effective at producing useful comparisons. Using purposive sampling allows for focussed comparison and in-depth analysis and it was within this comparative framework that Rotterdam and Philadelphia were selected. The impetus for this project was the observation of a substantial amount of faith-based activity in the Dutch city of Rotterdam; in a country that touts its secularism, this was unusual. In contrast, faith-based organisations have been highly visible in the U.S., gaining particular attention from the second Bush Administration (2001-2009) and seeming to become a fixture on the policy landscape. The prominence of faith-based organisations in the U.S. has led to a rich literature on their activities (for example, Cnaan et. al. 2006; Dilulio, 2002; Dionne and Chen, 2001; Sider and Unruh, 2004) and it seemed reasonable to draw upon this work as a reference point for observations about faith-based organisations in the Dutch urban arena. In using the U.S. as a reference point, it became clear that understanding the mechanics of faith-based organisations in both the Dutch arena and the U.S. required close and specific comparison. Rotterdam was the clear starting point in the Netherlands because of its active religious arena; the challenge then, was to select a U.S. city that offered sufficient comparability (Ragin, 1997).

In reviewing U.S. cities, it was decided to filter out cities based on factors that were not directly relevant and that might have an excessive impact on the nature of city life, distorting the comparison. For example, U.S. cities may be dominated by a single immigrant or ethnic group – Cubans in Miami, Mexicans in Los Angeles, or African-Americans in Atlanta, for example – and this dominance can lead to activities and roles that may be too specific to that city. While some degree of context-dependence is expected – and indeed, desirable – excessive specificity undermines the project of sufficient comparability. Therefore, U.S. cities were reviewed using five criteria to filter out factors that might overdetermine the type of faith-based activity occurring in a given city. First, paying attention to relational comparison (Ward, 2009), cities were

[2] Quantitative positivists have criticised qualitative case study as a being problematic due to the small number of cases under study; this is often referred to as the "small-N problem". Ragin, Snyder and others have written extensively about this issue, noting primarily that first, because case studies are most often concerned with theory development not theory testing, there is not an existing theory that cases will be testing. Second, advocates of the case study approach note that large-N sampling and modelling obscures causal heterogeneity and national heterogeneity, tending to test and describe social reality rather than understand it.

selected based on their relative position among U.S. cities: just as Rotterdam is a second order city in the Netherlands, similarly ranked cities were sought in the U.S. This initial list of 15 cities (see Appendix A) was then culled based on the percentage of African-Americans, percentage of immigrants (based on place of birth), origin of immigrants (based on region) and percentage of households below the poverty line (as defined by the U.S. Census Bureau). Cities were eliminated if their populations in each of these categories were too high or too low. For example, in Table 3.2, five possible U.S. cities are considered based on the aforementioned criteria; Atlanta was eliminated because of the unusually high percentage of African-American residents, at 56% of the city's population; similarly, immigrants in Boston pre-dominated from a single region, at 48% of immigrants arriving from Latin and Central America; likewise, immigrants in Chicago and Washington, D.C. overwhelmingly originated in Latin and Central America. U.S. cities were sorted using ethnicity and immigration as guiding criteria in order to control for ethnic cultural causality: in order to avoid reductive conclusions that associated faith-based activity with one immigrant or ethnic group, a city that was not dominated by a single ethnic or immigrant group was sought. Not only would the presence of a range of ethnic and cultural groups allow for more nuanced conclusions, but it would also enhance comparability with Rotterdam, where immigrants originate from many different regions (see Table 3.1).

Based on these criteria, the city of Philadelphia seemed well suited to a comparison with Rotterdam. The city has a significant African-American population (45%) as is common in American cities and a population of immigrants whose origins are distributed between Asia, Europe and Latin America. Further, thinking relationally, Philadelphia is embedded in the economic conurbation of the Northeast corridor, that runs from Boston to Washington, D.C.; this placement is akin to Rotterdam's position in the Randstad, which is also an economic band running across the south-western region of the Netherlands. Both Rotterdam and Philadelphia are not global cities but rather are peripheral cities that abut the centre making them suited to relational comparison and underlining their functional equivalence.

**Table 3.1.** Rotterdam, origin of immigrants, 2008

| | |
|---|---|
| Latin America* | 12.3% |
| Turkey | 7.8% |
| Morocco | 6.4% |
| Other | 19.7% |

** including Suriname and the Dutch Antilles*
Source:
Publiekszaken Rotterdam, Centrum voor Onderzoek en Statistiek; http://213.160.249.87/reportportal/design/view.aspx; (3 February 2010).

Table 3.2. Selected U.S. cities, basic demographic data, 2008

| | Atlanta | Boston | Chicago | Philadelphia | Washington, D.C. |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Total population | 445,709 | 613,086 | 2,725,206 | 1,448,911 | 588,373 |
| African-Americans (% of population) | 56 | 26 | 35 | 45 | 56 |
| Immigrants* (% of population) | 7 | 28 | 22 | 11 | 13 |
| Immigrant regions of origin (%) | | | | | |
| Asia | 24 | 24 | 19 | 38 | 18 |
| Europe | 16 | 16 | 19 | 22 | 17 |
| Latin America | 50 | 50 | 58 | 31 | 50 |
| Other | 12 | 12 | 5 | 10 | 17 |
| Median household income (U.S. $) | 47,464 | 51,849 | 46,767 | 36,222 | 56,428 |
| % Households below poverty line | 17 | 19 | 18 | 22 | 16 |

**Based on birthplace*
Source:
U.S. Census Bureau; 2006-2008 American Community Survey (ACS) using American Factfinder <http://factfinder.census.gov/servlet/DatasetMainPageServlet?_program=ACS&_submenuId=&_lang=en&_ts=>, (February 21 2010).

## 3.5. METHODS

In order to generate data that is verifiable and allows for greater accuracy, it was decided that this study would use qualitative triangulation. Several methodological strategies were considered before the following three methods were selected: semi-structured interviews (also known as guided interviews), document analysis (including internal organisational documents, media coverage, external reports, visual texts) and participant observation (Stake, 2005). In addition to allowing for greater validity, because "[q]ualitative research [is] a continuous process of constructing versions of reality" (Flick, 2005: 4; Denzin and Lincoln, 2005), multiple techniques allow for building a richer, in-depth narrative of the social reality that is created in the interactions between FBOs, the people they serve, and the communities they place themselves within. Although interviews alone may generate much useful data, they produce information that is voluntarily revealed by the actors; that is, respondents are aware of the information they convey and can shape their responses as well as selectively reveal and hide information. This component of awareness offers the advantage of being able to gain the actor's understanding and interpretation of events, mechanisms and processes, however, similarly the respondent may also wilfully shape their narrative to place themselves or their affiliates (including their own organisations

and networks) in a more favourable light. Carefully constructed questions and interview processes can mitigate some of this bias towards favourable self-portraits, however, observation and document analysis offer a valuable supplement because they allow the researcher to gather implicit information to extend and verify the explicit narrative.

Before moving on to discuss the specific methods used, a brief note on the tension between participant observation and action research is necessary. The leadership of the organisations in the study sometimes requested feedback and guidance based on the ongoing study. This was an unexpected response, moving the research process closer to the boundaries of action research. Although the research process was impacted by a high level of engagement by some informants, key characteristics of action research were not incorporated. Action research encourages the involvement of all actors that would typically be seen as "subjects" or "respondents" in the research process; these actors become partners in the process of research and the role of the researcher shifts to a facilitator and guide. The researcher brings expertise in techniques, substantive knowledge and process management while encouraging an agenda that is created with those who would ordinarily be studied; in this way the community is empowered through the research process and shapes both the scholar's view of it, and the outcome of the research. In contrast, this study was not developed collaboratively with respondents and the researcher controlled the direction and output of data collection and analysis. And because action research is participatory, collaborative and change oriented, it was not suitable for this research project largely because this project sought to understand, describe and analyse. However, many of the lessons of action research such as enhanced sensitivity to a community's power position and the interrogation of the researcher's gaze as an objectifying process were useful in approaching research ethically and transparently.

When the researcher's expertise was requested, it was provided by offering the organisation short reports on the research process and findings, along with cautions that any findings were preliminary because the data had not been fully collected and analysed. In one case, a forum was set up for early findings to be presented: this provided an opportunity to validate data gathered from that respondent group because they were able to affirm or deny the researcher's analysis; and the forum was used as another data gathering source. This was an unusual circumstance during this research process, where information was actively flowing in two directions, from researcher to informants and simultaneously, from informants to researcher. In short, although some elements of action research were present, the essential characteristics of a jointly developed research agenda and practise were not, and the relationship between researcher and informants continued to be one in which research was conducted based on a non-collaboratively developed set of research goals.

### 3.5.1. *Participating at a distance: Observer as participant*[3]

In geography, four models of participant observation have been commonly used: observation only (with no interaction with the researched), observer as participant, participant as observer and complete participation (Kearns, 2005). The first and last are the extremes on this spectrum; the first taking place in complete removal from field and subjects, and the last in complete immersion. The two middling positions differ in whether participation or observation is the primary activity, but each offers the advantage of straddling the line between insider and outsider position (Jorgenson, 1989). In this project, the research focus required a navigation between the micro (everyday experiences) and the meso-level (planned and operationalized meanings), where observation was the primary approach. Using the *observer as participant* approach allowed the researcher to remain at a slight remove from those studied and to maintain the flexibility to move between insider and outsider positions. In making the determination to place *observation as central*, it was important to maintain an awareness that it is often unavoidable for a researcher who works with multiple groups to create a degree of cross-pollination – when, for example, a group asks about another group that the researcher works with – but it was not the intent of the project for the researcher to alter the systems under study.

Another challenge of observation is managing the balance between assumptions that often assist in blending into particular contexts so the observer's position is not highlighted and inadvertently mistaken assumptions that have the opposite effect. A pertinent example of this occurred at a mosque where I intended to participate in and observe a service. The purpose of this was threefold: to observe the dynamics of the service, to hear the content of the in-group message and to become a familiar and unthreatening presence to enhance my credibility and sense of trust with my informants. I had not attend a Muslim prayer service before, but I was familiar with prayer rites and general mosque layouts from watching television coverage of Arabic mosques, documentaries and from Muslim friends. I knew then, that as a woman, I would be seated in a separate area from the men, I also knew that shoes were to be removed before entering the mosque and that women covered their heads. There were other aspects of the event that I was unsure of my role in – for example, Muslims perform ablutions before prayer, but I was unsure if that was also required of me and similarly, I was uncertain about if and how to participate in prayer rituals. I asked my informants how I should behave, but, concerned that I would be inadvertently offensive and unwilling to influence how they treated outsiders (as this was in part why I was using the participant observation method), I did not press for further details when I was told only that I should sit in the women's section and offered no further direction. I decided that I would do as I had done in Christian churches: observe the worshippers behaviour and act to blend in. These then, were my assumptions.

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[3] A version of this section was published in *Qualitative Research Methods* by Hennink, Hutter, & Bailey, 2010.

The flaws of these assumptions were illuminated shortly. When I attempted to enter the mosque, Laila, the woman who was acting as the greeter at the door intercepted me. She had seen me talking with a key community member (Fatima) several times but recognised me as a stranger to the community and always regarded me with a hostile gaze; this was our first verbal interaction. She asked me who I was and what I was doing; I explained that I was researching the community and was interested in attending the service, and that the key informant had suggested this service. The explanation was constructed to demonstrate benign interest and suggest that I had been pre-vetted by a key community member. Laila's expression was unconcealed disapproval, but the fact that I was known to Fatima prevented her from barring me. Despite the fact that I had been in the process of taking off my shoes when she approached me, she reinforced her disapproval and my outsider status by telling me that I needed to take my shoes off. In an attempt to demonstrate full compliance and respect, I asked her if I should also wear my scarf to cover my head. I was already holding the scarf in my hand, but in requesting her permission I wanted to acknowledge her authority and demonstrate my deference, both to her and to the religious context. However, in doing so, I inadvertently provoked her. She questioned why I would wear the scarf – this was such an unexpected question: I had thought that women were always to cover their heads in a mosque and doing so would convey my respect. Her response to this was that there was no need for me to do so. It became clear that at least in this mosque, covering one's head indicated belief and in attempting to cover my head, I was attempting to pass as a believer. Pretending to be a believer would clearly be fraudulent and disrespectful – my attempt at deference had turned out to be an active insult.

This incident illustrates some of the challenges and opportunities of participant observation as a technique. At first glance, the challenges seem most obvious: clearly, despite preparation that I thought would allow me to straddle insider/outsider boundaries, I had inadvertently violated rules that jeopardised any trust this informant might have had in me. While writing my notes afterwards, this was the element that stood out most for me, and I was concerned about my relationship with the mosque-based community. However, further reflection allowed me to discern the nuances of religion and community that the encounter revealed. First, the interaction highlighted the specifically *religious* nature of this mosque community: in other mosques, where most worshippers belonged to a single ethnic or cultural group, wearing a headscarf was *as much* a cultural expression as a religious one and cultural boundaries are permeable because they emphasise behaviour and do not require belief – hence all women in a mosque would cover their heads. In the mosque community I was researching, behaviour indicated belief, not cultural belonging or respect. Second, it suggested a difference in the understanding of what constitutes respectful behaviour between a (Western) secular – and inherently Christian – perspective and one rooted in Islam as practised in this mosque. In Christianity, respectful behaviour requires the outsider to dress as the believers and participate in most ritual in the same

way; that is, with the exception of taking communion, which is seen as the behavioural manifestation of Christian belief, an outsider should ritually stand and sit in accord with the believers and may sing with them too. These are all seen as acts of respect, and perhaps even community. Community is conceptualised as having two circles: an inner circle of believers, but also, an outer circle that too *some* extent, encompasses non-believers too. In contrast, in this mosque, there was a single circle of believers that was carefully policed to ensure genuine membership of those within, but non-believers were not of concern.

### *3.5.2. Interviews*

Interviews were used to gather information about the expectations and formal narratives that respondents used to understand the role and activities of the faith-based organisations in the study. Members of three groups were interviewed: the leadership of the organisations; members of the organisations; and neighbourhood residents. Interviews focussed on three primary areas: the activities, composition and funding of the organisations; the relationship of organisations to neighbourhood and definition of community held by interviewees; finally, the role of religion in the functioning and perception of the organisations, members and residents (the full interview guide can be found in Appendix B). Interviewees within each group were asked in different ways, what the organisation did, what services it provided and how it was funded. These questions were designed to establish a baseline understanding of organisational activities. Next, a series of questions were asked to elucidate the relationship of the FBO to the neighbourhood and to ideas of community. Interviewees were asked, *how do you define your neighbourhood?* Followed by questions that provided them an opportunity to talk about what they saw as the FBOs actual and desired role in the neighbourhood. In the process, interviewees often explained what they saw the FBOs doing in the neighbourhood and how they were shaping the definition of the neighbourhood and creating a sense of community. They were then asked questions where the particular FBO was compared to other neighbourhood organisations and they were encouraged to compare activities in their neighbourhood to other neighbourhoods. In the last area of focus, interviewees were asked questions designed reveal the role of religion in the activities of the organisations and how they were perceived, and in the lives of the interviewees themselves.

Typically, the interview process consisted of identifying interviewees, making contact with them and finally, conducting the interview; there were challenges at each of these stages. In recruiting interviewees, I drew upon formal affiliations, information gathered during participant observation and snowballing techniques. Key members of the FBOs were immediately apparent from their organisational affiliation and many individuals who were employed by an FBO or were official volunteers viewed information dissemination as part of their jobs and it was straightforward to set up interviews with these individuals. It was more difficult to access organisation members and residents

and for this I relied on my presence as a participant observer and upon snowballing. Attending events such as church services and public meetings provided the opportunity to make informal contact with church member and residents and during these informal conversations, the role of the particular individual I was speaking with would become clear or they would refer to key individuals; the latter would then be approached and asked to participate in an interview at another time. In order to gain access to residents who did not attend events, I asked congregation members and residents who I had established contact with, to refer me to someone who was a non-participant. In the case of the Beaumont Initiative[4] in West Philadelphia, because of the limited geographic area, interviewees were recruited simply visiting every house that seemed to be occupied[5].

Beyond recruitment, the challenge in interviews extended to the time, location and public or private nature of the interview context. In many instances, the interviewees were struggling economically so they were working multiple jobs at different locations along with caring for children, making time a scarce resource. One respondent put it this way:

> "I really want to help you, but I wake up at 5:30am to get my kids ready for school and find out where I'm working that day and what shift I'm working. If I'm lucky, by 7:30am, I know what location I'll be at and when my shift will end and me and the kids can leave the house at the same time. Then I usually work until 4:30pm or sometimes they extend my shift and I won't be home until 7:30pm – and I'll have to find someone to take them after school – and then I have to get the kids dinner and help them with their homework and then it's time for bed. So I'm not sure when I can talk to you. I get a 30 minute lunch break – maybe you can talk to me then? But I'll have to call you and tell you what location I'm at, because I don't where I'll be."

Cases such as this, where personal schedules were severely overloaded, were not uncommon. Some people responded by heroically making themselves available for the few minutes of free time they had (a lunch break in the example, above), while some avoided attempts to set a time by ignoring messages and yet others refused to be interviewed at the outset. These situations occurred with regularity in Philadelphia and were stark reminders of the structural deficiencies faced by many in the U.S.: the lack of a stable, predictable work environment for low- and unskilled workers; the absence of childcare; and stresses of commuting. Time constraints of this manner were less present in Rotterdam in large part because Dutch state and social structures fill in these gaps.

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[4] The Initiative was named after Beaumont Street, where the houses in need of rehabilitation were located. It is merely an odd coincidence that one of the supervisors of this project shares a name with the street.

[5] Houses that appeared to be abandoned were not approached because it was unclear whether the structures, including outer elements such as front steps and gates, were safe to use.

In both cities, confidentiality and the location of the interview were important elements in the interview process. Interviews were often conducted at an FBOs' offices and in private, but in instances where the interview was conducted elsewhere, often at informant's home, privacy was not automatic and the encounter often contained multiple meanings. For example, in an interview with an immigrant Muslim woman in Rotterdam, the woman told me of being a victim of domestic abuse by her husband, even though he was in the room. At first, I was startled to hear this information being so freely shared and wondered if doing so would further endanger her; however, she soon made clear that her husband understood neither Dutch nor English very well – her responses to me were in a mix of the two languages – and also, that she had reported him to the police and they had made him aware of the costs of further violence. Her husband wanted to be present so that it was clear to his wife and children that he was still the head of the household – that is, a stranger could not talk to them without his presence and knowledge – yet, his wife used the occasion to subvert this exercise of power by revealing his transgressions to a stranger without his knowledge. Sometimes interviewees were willing to share personal details as part of the natural progression of the conversation and increasing trust and rapport with the interviewer, but might become concerned that personal information would be used inappropriately; these concerns were addressed by referring respondents to the *Statement of Confidentiality* (Appendix C) that they were given either in writing or orally at the beginning of the interview. Respondents were often concerned about how their words would used and who would be reading them and discussing the scope of the dissertation and resulting publication efforts often proved reassuring.

### *3.5.3. Documents*

Document analysis added a temporal dimension to the data so that a view into the development of a position, an issue, an organisation or a neighbourhood was gained from these data sources. Documents consisted of internal memoranda (such as meeting minutes), vision and mission statements, external and self-evaluations as well as web sites, and media coverage. Access to documents was highly organisation dependent: both Mennonite congregations in Philadelphia permitted access to their congregational archives as well as current meeting minutes, while all the other organisations limited researcher access to documents that were publicly available.

Text-based documents were supplemented by visual materials; photographs were taken of buildings, neighbourhood spaces and events. The act of taking photographs also provided opportunities for interacting with neighbourhood residents and others who were not accessed through institutional means. It was not uncommon for passers-by to approach me and ask why I was taking photographs of buildings and neighbourhood spaces. The neighbourhoods in this study were all marginalized neighbourhoods, and as such were not tourist destinations; to residents then, an outsider taking photographs was an object of suspicion, because an outsider with a putatively objective interest in the

neighbourhood could be from a government or other agency attempting to make (often) unwelcome interventions in their neighbourhood. Typically, I would be approached with some variation of the statement: "Why are you taking photographs? There's nothing here." The statement revealed both hostility to outsiders and a belief that their neighbourhood lacked anything of value that others might want to see. As a researcher, being approached and questioned was preferable to being the subject of hostile watchfulness; both in Rotterdam (in Tarwewijk) and in Philadelphia, the stares of idle young men while I held a digital camera underscored the possibility of theft and reinforced the discomfort of being an outsider.

## 3.6. PILOT STUDY

In order to assess the usefulness of the methods selected and to gain greater familiarity with the field site, preliminary interviews were conducted in Rotterdam in April 2007 and a pilot study was undertaken in Philadelphia in November 2007. These early ventures into the field allowed for greater understanding of the specific nature of the data that would be generated and provided an initial experience of data analysis (Kitchin and Tate, 2000). During the pilot, an informal institutional audit provided information on the scope of neighbourhood organisational activity; the information gathered during this process created the basis for the selection of organisations and neighbourhoods to be studied in greater depth.

In speaking with both organisational leaders and with residents, it became clear that the positionality of the researcher would be an important factor in interacting with all informants. While there is a range of institutional size and activity in the Third Sector, it is a sector that is sensitive to criticism, and not surprisingly, the smallest and least robust of organisations are particularly wary of outsiders with a putatively impartial interest in their activities. Of course, researchers easily fall into this latter category of putatively impartial outsiders, and there was a clear guardedness in talking with me. In the process of establishing connections and attempting to gain basic information about organisations, it became clear that gaining trust was more complex than simply establishing rapport. There were several factors that contributed to the level of trust that could be established, and by extension, the depth and hidden information that could be extracted from an interviewee. The most important factors were: length of contact with the organisations, the community's issues and the neighbourhood; relatedly, the interviewer's credibility in terms of prior knowledge and institutional situatedness; and the interviewer's relationship to religion. Discovering the importance of these factors during the pilot process allowed some steps to be taken to mitigate them during the primary data gathering phase. The first two issues – of the researcher's connection to and knowledge of specific communities – were addressed through the visible and persistent presence of the researcher at community events and in the neighbourhood; this reassured the informants that they were not being

subject to negative and exploitive scrutiny. The last issue of one's relationship to religion was multi-layered and is addressed in the section, below, on researcher positionality.

## 3.7. DATA COLLECTION AND MANAGEMENT

Several low inference recording tools were used to record data: a digital voice recorder, field notes, a research diary and a digital camera. All formal interviews were taped and transcribed, while informal interviews were sometimes taped – when taping was as "naturally occurring" as possible (Peräkylä, 2005) – and at other times when taping would have proved intrusive, notes on the interviews were written up as soon as the interview was concluded. Once the interviews were transcribed, the qualitative data analysis program, MaxQDA, was used to manage the transcribed files as well as field notes and to assist with analysing the data.

### *3.7.1. The mechanics of making sense of the data: Coding*

Following grounded theory techniques, data analysis has not been sequential: that is, some level of data analysis was performed *during* the period of data collection, to facilitate the iterative nature of data gathering suggested by grounded theory although overall patterns and themes became more apparent after the fieldwork was completed. The data was "fractured" into coding categories (Strauss as quoted in Maxwell, 1996; Cope, 2005), but using MaxQDA software, links were maintained to the original contexts (therefore avoiding context stripping), while connections were also created links between data fragments to identify emerging themes.

### *3.7.2. Data collection challenges*

Collecting data in a non-controlled environment that is highly dependent on the co-operation of human informants is always challenging, yet these constraints are rarely mentioned. In this project, as in most research processes, time was a primary bounding factor; a second constraint was the researcher's lack of fluency in the Dutch language. The method of observation in ideal-type requires extensive immersion and observation over time; ethnographic studies, for example, which rely on observation as the primary or sole technique, often take place over the course of several years (see for example, Venkatesh, 2000; Whyte, 1943). Practical constraints such as funding and access to sites, however, can limit the amount of time available to spend in the field. In this study, data was gathered in Philadelphia over the course of a year, from Fall 2007 to Fall 2008, while data in Rotterdam was collected first in the Spring of 2007 and then from Spring 2009 to Spring 2010. Supplementing observation with interviews and text analysis allowed for an additional view into the social processes under study.

Language constraints required some methodological adaptation. As a native English speaker, communication and observation was not an issue in Philadelphia, in Rotterdam,

however, language limitations prevented informal aural observation. The Dutch school system emphasises English language learning and there is wide exposure to the English language in the Netherlands through various media and so most informants in Rotterdam were able to communicate extensively and effectively in English. Where informants stumbled with English, a colleague of mine or the informant's mediated as necessary; Dutch language documents and web sites were reviewed in collaboration with a student researcher.

# 4 FILLING IN THE GAPS: MOULDING FAITH TO SECULAR NEEDS IN ROTTERDAM

## 4.1. INTRODUCTION

In every Dutch context where I have discussed my research on faith-based organisations in Rotterdam, an audience member inevitably raises their hand and states, "There is no religion in the Netherlands". This declaration is usually followed with an additional assertion, "Where there is religion, surely it is only for the non-Dutch" by which it is meant those who are not ethnically Dutch, both recent immigrants and the descendants of immigrants[1]. This is an idea that is prevalent in the Netherlands, in part because of the well-known dismantling of the country's system of pillarization (*verzuiling*), which was accompanied by a steady reduction in church attendance. This perception of the Netherlands is compounded by the country's stance on the issues of prostitution, same-sex rights, euthanasia and marijuana usage, among others (Brants, 1998; Hendin, 2001; Maxwell, 2001; Pakes, 2003). The tolerance that permits and regulates these behaviours and activities is often opposed by mainstream religions; in particular Christianity and Islam. The co-existence of a position of tolerance on these matters and active religion seems at odds.

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[1] In Dutch, the ethnic Dutch are commonly referred to as *autochtoon*; in English the meaning of this is close to "native" or "indigenous". The commonly used Dutch term for immigrants has been *allochtoon*.Both terms carry negative connotations because of underpinnings of ethnic nationalism in their use; the terms are used to linguistically preclude immigrants from ever becoming Dutch. Because they are so laden, the terms used here will be "ethnic Dutch" or "indigenous Dutch" and "immigrants".

While the idea that the Netherlands is not a religious country emerges from a shift away from a *verzuiling* system to a system putatively unmarked by religion, religion persists in what is arguably Europe's most secularised country. There are several faith-based organisations in Rotterdam, that are not solely immigrant-derived and yet they seem to find a role for themselves in the life of the city. Why do these religiously-driven organisations persist? What do they do in Rotterdam? These are some of the questions, this study seeks to answer. In this chapter, I will first review the larger national issues of pillarization (*verzuiling*) and depillarization (*ontzuiling*) and the secularism that seems to prevail in the Netherlands. As discussed in the previous chapters, this investigation of faith-based organisations was guided by the iterative interactions between theory and empirical realities. To reflect this process, I first give a brief overview of each organisation and then present them in the context of specific issues and where necessary, I discuss specific organisations in greater detail. The implicit equivalence between immigrants and religion is prevalent both within communities of faith and state structures such as the city government (*gemeente*). As will become apparent in this chapter, however, there are many variations in how each actor employs this equivalence.

## 4.2. ROTTERDAM AS THE IMMIGRANT CITY

Within the Netherlands, Rotterdam has increasingly become identified with immigration, especially from "non-Western" countries[2]. While Amsterdam has also been a destination for immigrants to the Netherlands, a larger proportion of the city's immigrants are from "Western" countries and they are frequently connected to the multinational corporations that help drive Amsterdam's economy (Snel, De Boom, & Engbersen, 2005). Immigrants to Rotterdam on the other hand, have different origins and a different place in Rotterdam society. Rotterdam's economy has been historically driven by its harbour and industrial sectors and immigrants to Rotterdam have typically come via the sea and to work in various labour intensive capacities. It is a city with working class roots that has long tolerated the presence of the non-Dutch but the city has undergone a shift in tolerance in recent years.

Many interviewees in this study along with scholarly and non-scholarly commentators have noted that the shifts in Dutch views about "non-Western" immigrants in particular was noticeable in the aftermath of two events that drew widespread public attention (Vliegenthart & Boomgaarden, 2007). The first, in 2002, was the seemingly sudden popularity of the right-wing populist politician, Pim Fortuyn, who characterised the issue of immigration in polarizing terms, placing Muslim immigrants and their descendants in

[2] This is the term used by policy makers and in regulation in the Netherlands. As defined by Statistics Netherlands, "non-Western" includes "immigrants who come from countries in Africa, Latin-America and Asia (except Indonesia and Japan) or Turkey" while "Western" immigrants are those "who come from countries in Europe (except Turkey), North America and Oceania, or Indonesia or Japan" [my translations], (www.cbs.nl/nl-NL/menu/methoden/begrippen/default.htm).

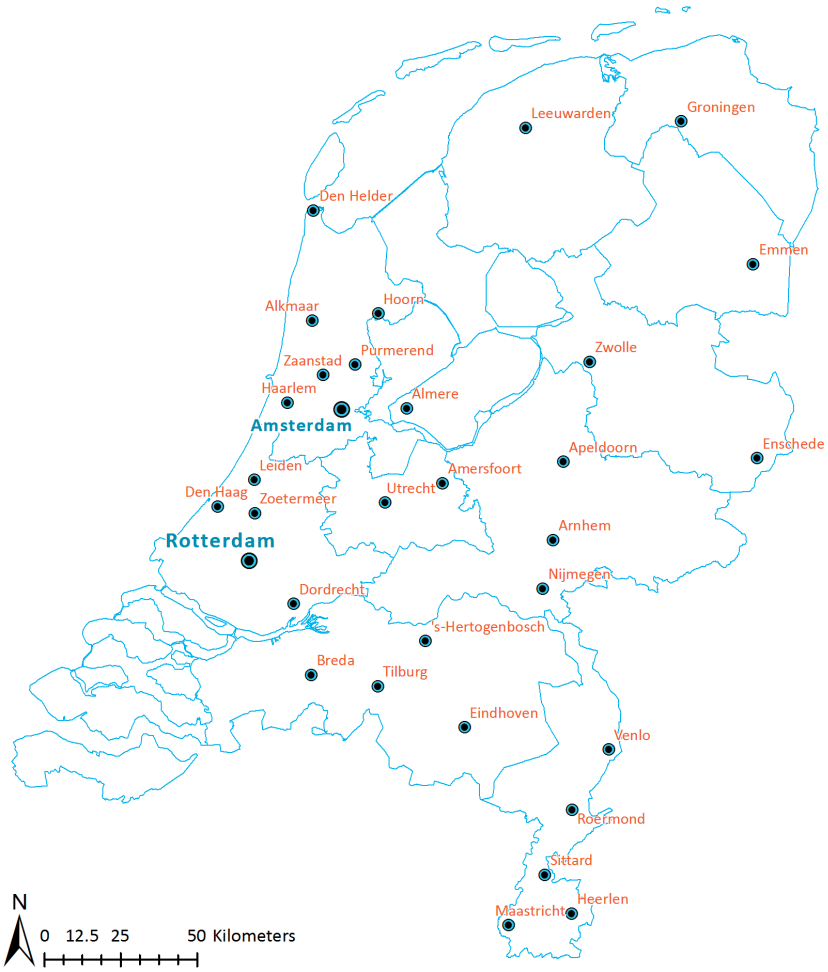


**Figure 4.1.** Map of the Netherlands, showing Rotterdam at the south west corner.

particular, in opposition to indigenous Dutch culture. Anke, an informant in this study vocalised an opinion that was echoed by many others: "Pim Fortuyn made expressing anti-immigrant sentiment acceptable. Before him, people might have thought it, but they wouldn't say it". The second event was the assassination of filmmaker Theo van Gogh who had made a film perceived by many Muslims as anti-Islamic. Van Gogh's assassin targeted him because of this film and his statements that were critical of Islam. These two events were significant in drawing negative attention to "non-Western" immigrants and focussed especially on immigrants from Turkey, Morocco and other Islamic countries. The framing of a "culture war" and the re-framing of citizenship as containing a central

cultural component has contributed to increasing tensions between indigenous Dutch and immigrants (Davie, 2006; Koopmans & Muis, 2009; Sniderman & Hagendoorn, 2009; Van der Veer, 2006; Vliegenthart & Boomgaarden, 2007). In the aftermath of this, as a city with a high concentration of "non-Western" immigrants, Rotterdam has been cast as the centre of immigration and immigrant life in the Netherlands (Niessen, Schibel, & Magoni, 2003; Vasta, 2007). The role of immigrants in Rotterdam has an important connection to faith: as Dutch society has increasingly viewed itself as secular, immigrants have become viewed largely responsible for the persistence of religion in the Netherlands. The logical chains that are drawn based on these premises are that the indigenous Dutch are secular while immigrants are religious, and in the Dutch imagination, since Rotterdam is a city of immigrants, it is more naturally a city of religion than other cities in the Netherlands.

## 4.3. DUTCH SECULARIZATION

In the Netherlands, the system of pillarization became entrenched in the early 20th century and began to be dismantled between the 1960s and 1970s (Bax, 1990). This was a system based primarily on an individual's religious affiliation and resulted in a Protestant pillar, a Catholic pillar and two secular pillars, that of the liberals and social democrats. Pillarization was designed to allow each denominational grouping to be "sovereign in their own circle" (Bax, 1995, p. 7) so that a citizen would not only attend religious services within their own denomination, but they would also attend denominational schools, listen to denominational media, be represented by denominational trade unions, receive denominational health care and so on. The pillars allowed citizens to be entirely socialised within a denominational system of values and to receive resources via that system. Although their existence in separate spheres meant that Protestants, Catholics and so on, interacted minimally, consensus and a stable consociational democracy resulted because of co-operation among the elites of each pillar (Lijphart, 1975). The process of de-pillarization (*ontzuiling*) meant that individuals were no longer confined to their denominational sphere, decreasing the distance between citizens of different religions and secularizing resources such as health care and media (Bax, 1990; Dekker & Ester, 1996). Instead of accessing services via their denominational structures, citizens could avail themselves of resources based on resource-type: a Protestant could now seek out a doctor because he or she was a specialist rather than because he or she was a doctor in a Protestant clinic, who also happened to be a specialist. Quite suddenly the possible instances of interaction between different confessional groups expanded exponentially; this expansion meant that increasingly contacts were *across* denominations rather than primarily *within* them. In this way, de-pillarization and secularisation could be seen to unfold hand-in-hand (Knippenberg, 1998). Further, the reduced presence of religion in the public sphere was accompanied by and likely facilitated a decline in church attendance. These forces and church attendance in particular were seen as markers of secularisation.

Norris and Inglehart characterise the Netherlands as experiencing one of the "sharpest" declines in church attendance and in their view, related religiosity (2004, pp. 88–89). The reliance on churchgoing as an indicator of the role of religion assumes that religiosity and church attendance are linked, obscuring the phenomenon of "believing without belonging" as Davie has called it (1994, 2006, 2007), as a significant characteristic of the transformation of religion in Europe. Ignoring "believing without belonging" approaches that foster a dispersed religiosity, coupled with an emphasis on church attendance creates an implied overstatement of the Netherlands as a wholly secular country. The question of whether the Netherlands is secular does not automatically disqualify inquiries into the state and role of religion (Sengers, 2005); a general pattern of reduced churchgoing does not suggest that religion has no significance in the Netherlands as audiences often conclude. Church attendance is problematic too because of its reliance on a mainline Christian model of recognizing religion. If religiosity were expanded beyond this model, rituals, activities and behaviours linked to particular theological imperatives might offer additional information as to religiosity. Survey questions such as belief in a deity and prayer frequency ignore activities such as charitable donations such as *zakat* in Islam that are considered religious acts, and ignore that some religions, such as Judaism, do not require belief, but solely action with belief as a desirable but not required by-product. If such acts are taken into account, it becomes apparent that there has a been a "transformation of religion into the ethics of engagement" (Kennedy, 2005, p. 35). That is, as traditional expressions of worship decline, religion continues to remain vibrant in Dutch society, but it has shifted from the space of traditional religion to the spaces of a religious periphery, to "engage the world on its own terms" (Kennedy, 2005, p. 35). Despite the decrease in particular markers of religiosity, the Dutch "religious sector is a dynamic one" (Sengers, 2005, p. 11).

De-pillarization might have triggered a shift in the shape of religion in the Netherlands, but it did not mean the complete disappearance of denominational segmentation. As Hupe notes, "pillarization on the level of organisations in the Netherlands is still…strong" (Hupe, 1993, p. 377) because many meso-level institutions have remained within a denominational identity; this is most apparent in matters of elementary schooling and school policies (Avest, Bakker, Bertram-Troost, & Miedema, 2007; Spiecker & Steutel, 2001). The legacy of pillarization in meso-institutional structures is also apparent in the activities and persistence of faith-based organisations in Rotterdam.

## 4.4. OVERVIEW OF THE ORGANISATIONS

The Rotterdam faith-based organisations examined in this study range from congregations to community service agencies. The organisations were selected in various ways: some were selected based on the existing literature (Beaumont, Noordegraaf, & Volz, 2004; Beaumont & Noordegraaf, 2007; Zondag, Sanders, & Spruit, 2003); some based on public

visibility (Jong, 2009; "Samen naar de kerk integreert," 2007); and the remainder were selected through snowballing using existing organisational contacts and the Rotterdam immigrant churches directory (Calvert, 2007). The criteria by which they were selected is elaborated upon in Chapter 3. The selections were validated by respondents as well, as they frequently mentioned that the landscape of faith-based organisations in Rotterdam was narrow and they would regularly refer to people and organisations I encountered through other channels. In short, in Rotterdam, it is a small group of both people and organisations whose work touches on community building, yet is connected to faith and religion and the actors are often familiar with each other.

The organisations fell into three categories: four were focussed primarily on community service and community building; two were umbrella organisations that sought to facilitate community services and assist other religious organisations; and three were congregations, engaging primarily in activities of worship (Table 4.1). Two of the community service organisations, the House of Hope and the Oude Wijken Pastoraat (OWP) were deliberately and institutionally geared towards community service in marginalized neighbourhoods. Established by the mainline Protestant churches, OWP has been an active participant in key social and care activities in the four Rotterdam neighbourhoods in which it has a physical presence (Beaumont & Dias, 2008). It participates in the *Lokaal Zorg Netwerk* (Local Care Network) and is a key member of the *Netwerk Dak*[3]. In terms of formal activity then, the OWP links to the state and city structures of social work via the *Lokaal Zorg Netwerk* and plays an important role as part of a coalition that seeks to address poverty in Dutch cities. OWP's primary source of funding continues to be the mainline churches, however, it also periodically applies for funds from foundations. The House of Hope is located in the Tarwewijk neighbourhood, south of the city's former harbour area in Feijenoord where a substantial proportion of residents are foreign-born. It was formed by a group of individuals who were connected to the International Christian Fellowship (ICF). While ICF characterises itself as inter-denominational, it is essentially an evangelical Protestant group with an emphasis on individual conversion and missionary work; and as indicated by its name is also emphatically inter-ethnic. Although the House of Hope is not an official offshoot of ICF, its key actors are ICF members, and its attention to Rotterdam's immigrant community continues to tie it to ICF. The separation from ICF is significant to the House of Hope itself, because it receives city and other state funding, so it is keen to avoid being seen as a congregational agency.

The two other organisations whose activities placed them in the community service category were less clearly constituted as community service groups. The Missionaries of Charity is an order of Catholic nuns founded by Mother Teresa. The nuns, often referred to in Rotterdam as the "Sisters of Charity", do not receive subsidies or direction from the Roman Catholic Church, despite being affiliated with Roman Catholicism. They operate

[3] Literally the "Roof Network".

Table 4.1. Organisations by type[4]

| Community service | Umbrella group | Congregation |
|---|---|---|
| Dharma (Hindu)*<br>House of Hope (Christian)<br>Missionaries of Charity (Catholic)<br>Oude Wijken Pastoraat (OWP) (Christian) | De Tafel (Muslim)*<br>Stichting voor Kerkelijk Sociale Arbeid (KSA) (Christian) | Crossroads (Christian Evangelical)*<br>New Life (Christian Pentecostal)*<br>Scots International (Christian Evangelical) |

* These are pseudonyms as detailed in the footnote below.

on strict vows of poverty, refusing to accept structural assistance from the Catholic Church or other sources and although they are based in India, they have chosen idiosyncratic outposts, because as one nun stated, "there are poor in cities too" (Sister Magnificat, Missionaries of Charity, interview, June 22, 2009); one such outpost is in Rotterdam. The Missionaries of Charity attempt to fulfil their order's mission to offer solace and compassion to those who are suffering – which would seem to necessitate engagement with those at society's margins – while maintaining a stance of *limited* engagement with society. The last organisation that falls into this category is Dharma. Dharma's connections to faith were the least visible, but this is in part attributable to the nature of Hinduism itself; as a polytheistic religion, it is decentralized, its practises are not necessarily primarily driven by single-site worship spaces and so faith can seem hidden when compared to formal and structured monotheistic beliefs and practises. Influenced by this, Dharma's religious elements were frequently conflated with ethnicity, which was more visible and clearly defined; Dharma characterised itself as a Hindu Surinamese organisation, with a fluid boundary between the ethnicity and the religion.

The two umbrella groups, De Tafel and KSA both served as facilitators and coalition builders for Rotterdam's religious sector. De Tafel was established by various mosques in the Rotterdam area, as a structure that would allow them to collectively access resources and to provide services to any organisation with a Muslim identity. Described as an organisation "of Muslims, by Muslims" (De Tafel) stresses its role as a clearinghouse for resources that individual Muslim organisations might find useful. While De Tafel focussed

[4] A note on names: The groups that are asterisked did not wish to be readily identified and so I have used pseudonyms for them. Of course, complete anonymity is impossible because specific actions and behaviours are important to this research study, so it maybe that the reader recognises a group through their activities as described here. This is unavoidable, although all reasonable steps have been taken to obscure these individual and organisational identities while maintaining the necessary specificity to make the study useful. For the organisations that are not asterisked, these are their actual names used in part because the organisations and their leadership are publicly active, making statements in the media and in other public realms.

Table 4.2. Table of organisational characteristics and activities

| Organisation name | Type | Role of religion | Role of immigrants | Services and activities | Funding sources |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Crossroads (Christian Evangelical) | Congregation | Religion is central; it encompasses motivation, activities, and is the reason for the organisation's existence | Immigrant-led and focussed | Worship services; provides space for neighbourhood after-school activities; addiction rehabilitation residences | Congregation members; private fundraising |
| De Tafel (Muslim) | Umbrella group | Religion is a vehicle of culture and ethnicity | Immigrant-led and focussed | Facilitates communication between mosques and the municipality; provides training to the municipality in Islamic issues; advocates on specific issues of concern to the Muslim community. | Member organisations; municipality of Rotterdam |
| Dharma (Hindu) | Community service | Religion is a vehicle of culture and ethnicity | Immigrant-led and focussed | Support for the elderly; community services for the Surinamese community | Non-profit foundations; municipality of Rotterdam; other government funding sources |
| House of Hope (Christian) | Community service | Religion increases clients' trust; motivates staff and some volunteers | Native-led and immigrant focussed | Parenting classes; women's group; coffee meetings; home visits; assisting neighbourhood residents understand and navigate government services and documents; social work-based assistance | Non-profit foundations; municipality of Rotterdam; other government funding sources |
| Missionaries of Charity (Catholic) | Community service | Religion is central; it encompasses motivation, activities, and is the reason for the organisation's existence | Mixed leadership; immigrant focussed | Women's shelter; free weekly meal | Private fundraising; donations |

Table 4.2. *Continued*

| Organisation name | Type | Role of religion | Role of immigrants | Services and activities | Funding sources |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| New Life (Christian Pentecostal) | Congregation | Religion is central; it encompasses motivation, activities, and is the reason for the organisation's existence | Immigrant-led and focussed | Worship services; intend to establish a soup kitchen | Congregation members; private fundraising |
| Oude Wijken Pastoraat (OWP) (Christian) | Community service | Religion increases clients' trust; motivates staff and some volunteers | Native-led and immigrant focussed | Providing space for worship; assisting neighbourhood residents understand and navigate government services and documents; watchful observing of elderly residents; organising community activities, including a weekly meal club; women's group; home visits; assistance to the undocumented | Mainline Protestant and Catholic churches |
| Stichting voor Kerkelijk Sociale Arbeid (KSA) (Christian) | Umbrella group | Religion increases clients' trust; motivates staff and some volunteers | Native-led and immigrant focussed | Supporting member organisations; programs for group holidays; interreligious dialogue program; assistance to the undocumented; working with municipality to assist welfare recipients; care for care-givers | Member organisations; non-profit foundations; municipality of Rotterdam |
| Scots International (Christian Evangelical) | Congregation | Religion is central; it encompasses motivation, activities, and is the reason for the organisation's existence | Immigrant-led and focussed | Worship services; providing space for worship to other groups; creating community events | Congregation members |

on Muslim communities, despite the "church" in its name, KSA sought to link various religious actors, including non-Christians. Both organisations are financially supported by their constituent organisations, but also apply for and receive city and national subsidies.

The last group of organisations in this study were congregations: that is, their primary purpose was to provide spaces of worship and to facilitate the rituals of worship. However, each of these congregations engaged in efforts to expand beyond the boundaries of traditional worship, into engaging with social issues and the communities around them. As congregations, their funding came primarily from church members, although for some, a desire to extend beyond worship fostered an interest in accessing city and other government subsidies. All three congregations, while rooted in the Netherlands and particularly in Rotterdam, had extensive connections internationally. The Crossroads and New Life churches were both founded in Rotterdam but linked to U.S.-based organisations, while the Scots International Church had historically ministered to British immigrants in Rotterdam, although transforming more recently to an orientation towards English-speaking residents, including immigrants from Africa.

Clearly, given the varying composition of these organisations, the role of religion within them varied as did their relationship to and role in the community. The remainder of this chapter will review some of the activities the organisations engage in; who they see as their constituents; and how they view their relationship to neighbourhood and place in Rotterdam.

## 4.5. PLACING IMMIGRANTS AT THE CENTRE

All the organisations in this study stated that their contemporary existence was geared primarily towards serving and working with immigrants, regardless of the origins of the organisation or its type. Interviewees saw religion as waning amongst the indigenous Dutch, but as vibrant and growing among immigrants, squarely placing faith as an immigrant activity. They characterized Rotterdam's religious sector as immigrant dominated and driven, asserting an image of non-existent faith in the indigenous Dutch population and rampant faith among immigrants.

> Secularization is [about] the white people—the Dutch white people. They are decreasing because they have less members but on the other side, you have a lot of migrant churches who are growing and growing. So when they are saying there is secularization, they are looking at the white people, but not at the immigrants that bring their own religion and things. Muslims as well, and Hindus. They're coming to Holland and they bring their religion and stay with it until now.
>
> *Hanny, KSA, interview, September 16, 2009*

For some groups, distinctions were rarely made between newer immigrants and those who had been in the Netherlands for a long time or descendants of immigrants who were

born in the Netherlands. The organisations which were led by ethnic minorities themselves tended to be more nuanced in making generational distinctions.

> Our youth, they grow up maybe within the church and if they don't find friends or something within the church that attracts them – then they will look for it outside. Now one of the big challenges is education: as soon as they go to the university, they lose interest because… Let's say, it's another world, in the sense of, they are exposed to agnostics…and all kinds of things – that they have discovered bigger things – that's one issue. The other issue is if they are living at home, they will still have the influence of parents, they will still have the influence of a conscientious – you know, "I am a child of God, people are looking at me and my actions." But if they are living on their own – that barrier [is absent] – they would do whatever they want, whenever they want. There are so much attractions in Europe and especially in Holland…If they had been in their own country, there is still some protection within your community: people know you, they know your parents, or whatever. But nothing in the Netherlands. Here, you're just a number in that million, you know, so they are more likely to turn their backs on the church, that's a problem. It's already a problem.
>
> *Isaac, Crossroads, interview, October 21, 2009*

For the Muslim organisation, De Tafel, and the Hindu organisation, Dharma, in particular, there was a heightened awareness that the children of immigrants were likely to become "like the Dutch" – that is, to see the religion as less central to their lives and accordingly drift from religious practise and from faith-related organisations. For De Tafel, this shift was aspirational; that is, declining interest in a specifically Muslim organisational framework might be an indication of desired assimilation and suggest that their constituents' central identity would be "Dutch" rather than "Muslim". An interviewee noted, "sometimes we say, we should make ourselves not necessary in a couple of generations" (Katje, De Tafel, interview, June 18, 2009). For Dharma, receding religious relevance was likened to the processes experienced by the mainline Dutch churches, where interest in the religious community was maintained only by its older members. This change was characterized as a regrettable *fait accompli*, because "the younger people here, they're only interested in clothing, dancing, film, make up" (Raj, Dharma, interview, October 8, 2009).

### *4.5.1. Navigating language*

Regardless of generational patterns, organisations commonly linked their activities to providing services to immigrants. The organisations that were primarily community service oriented, provided services that generally fell into one of two categories: assistance related to the *process* of immigration; and assistance related to being a non-native city resident. A major component of the former was providing language assistance and helping immigrants navigate the city and state bureaucracies. Both the OWP and House of Hope spent a significant amount of time reading through the legal and immigration related

correspondence of legal immigrants and refugees, translating the letters and explaining the information and directions contained within them. The official correspondence received by the immigrants was always in Dutch, usually using formal and legalistic language, while immigrants often only spoke and read their own languages – Arabic, Chinese, and so on – yet the organisations did not generally make an effort to learn the languages of their constituents, rather, they often translated the correspondence into English and then would rely upon an individual from within the immigrant group, who spoke English and their native language, to translate the information from English into the final language. Where this intermediate individual understood or spoke Dutch, but was unable to read it, the step translating the information into English was omitted. At the OWP, while all workers spoke Dutch and most spoke English, only one worker spoke additional languages. These additional language skills made him much sought after and created very strong links to those language communities. While there was clear dependence on a single contact because of these language capabilities, the organisation drew a line at actively improving the language capabilities of its other workers. A member of the leadership staff suggested that it was important in fact, to *not* extend the OWP's language reach because in relying on a community member to act as an interpreter between the OWP and other immigrants, the community was playing an active role in assisting itself.

In contrast, each congregation actively sought to interact with constituents in their own language(s) whenever possible. The New Life church was particularly attentive to language as a tool of inclusion: its worship services featured preaching in Dutch, with an on-stage interpreter translating the service into English. A church leader explained its choice of English, saying, "English is still one of the main languages that everybody understands. Most of the people talk it. So it opens doors for Africans and Asians, just name it." New Life had plans to extend its language capabilities too,

> This is like our translating booths – so we're not there yet, but we made it so we can use it if people from, like, Spanish people come. And we give them, like – what do you call it? – headphones. And then someone stands in there and interprets this; but for now we do it live. But this area is full of Polish people, Romanians. Look, this is the house of prayer and praise for all nations. So our services – we do have like 25 nationalities. They are visiting my services, so from wing to wing – it's Russians to Romanians, Polish people, Africans, there's so many and so mixed.
>
> *Alfred, New Life Church, interview, November 3, 2009*

In addition to investments in translating booths and other technology to assist non-Dutch speakers, New Life communicated its desire to "keep the international flavour" (Church leader, New Life Church) visually, through prominently displaying the flags of various countries and using biblical texts in English, throughout the church interior (Figure 4.2). These efforts were further seen as an attempt to assist non-Dutch speaking immigrants with learning Dutch.

**Figure 4.2.** The flags of various countries displayed in the New Life Church

> It helps those foreigners to learn Dutch and is a much more faster way to integrate – because you hear it through the word of God – and I mean you pick it up just like that. And of course, if you need to [go to] a school and you follow [a course] that's good, but here you get it live, every Sunday.…I go Dutch, he goes English, so you hear it and people pick it up like that. So it helps to integrate to because in our homes [the church shelter facilities], it's Dutch or English. So Antilleans, Surinamese, Polish, Romanians – it's English or Dutch that's it. Two languages, that's it. Because otherwise you would have those different groups – Antilleans together, Surinamese together, but in the church you can't do that.
>
> *Alfred, New Life Church, interview, November 3, 2009*

Congregations looked to English as the most viable language for communicating to and within ethnically and nationally mixed groups. The leadership of all three congregations in this study were immigrants themselves and viewed mixed language use as a way to reach out to constituents and meet them on ground they were comfortable with. However, two congregations, New Life Church and Crossroads, noted that indigenous Dutch members opposed the use of languages other than Dutch.

> Now here in Holland is when it comes to language, it's Dutch. So if you would come into the Dutch church and give them [something in English], they will tell you, it's not our language, we don't understand it – they might, but they will say that don't understand it and it's not for us.
>
> *Isaac, Crossroads, interview, October 21, 2009*

Similarly, at New Life Church, "So especially Dutch people, they have problems because I preach in Dutch and when the English comes over, it's like – I'm going to follow only the Dutch. But I say, we are international" (Alfred, New Life Church, interview, November 3, 2009). As these examples suggest, Dutch speakers resistance to other languages was a point of tension within congregations, in part because indigenous Dutch viewed the use of other languages as a move opposed to integration, while immigrants saw the co-existence of languages as a way to ease into the process of integration.

### *4.5.2. An "embedded presence"*

In less formal ways, the Oude Wijken Pastoraat sought to facilitate access to resources. An example of the hidden ways in which the Pastoraat had an impact, was the case of Habiba, a refugee from a war torn country[5]. Habiba was eager to convey her gratitude for the Pastoraat's assistance and to tell the story of her resettlement and struggles as a refugee. I was invited to her apartment, situated in the gritty central city neighbourhood of Middelland, above a video store and a café. The structure of Habiba's apartment was typically Dutch, with narrow and winding staircases over a commercial establishment, but the delineation between the culture of the physical structure of the mainstream Netherlands and that of its occupants began immediately inside the door, where the landing was filled not with bikes, as is common in many Dutch apartments, but with shoes, as many Islamic cultures discourage the wearing of shoes indoors. Inside, the apartment was furnished with thick carpets and gold-accented furniture, in a style that is common in many Islamic cultures. These material markers were important to Habiba and her family to distinguish their home as a place that reflected their culture, but also as Habiba emphasised, their comfortable surroundings illustrated that they had overcome the lack of resources that they encountered because of their refugee status.

Habiba and her husband and two children had come to the Netherlands as refugees from war, but despite the country's openness to the physical presence of refugees, they were given little assistance in navigating the paperwork they needed to file as well as the managing the necessities of everyday life. Workers at the Oude Wijken Pastoraat translated the Dutch paperwork into English – a language Habiba understood – and they helped file the paperwork for her. While using these informal services, she learned of a women's group run by the Oude Wijken Pastoraat; although the group's stated goal was simply

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[5] In order to protect Habiba's anonymity, her country of origin has been omitted.

to socialise with other women, it was also a site where women exchanged information and resources. It was here that Habiba discovered opportunities to learn Dutch as well as providing a space where she could practise her language skills and gain a greater understanding of the new culture in which she found herself. As Habiba put it, each of these steps allowed her to expand her knowledge of Dutch culture and the institutions she needed to navigate for herself and her children. The outcome of these steps was demonstrated in our interactions: Habiba and her children, both girls, were clearly a powerful force in their home and represented the family when *outside* the home too. This was significant because their culture of origin placed wide-ranging constraints on women and girls, placing men and especially husbands and fathers at the top of familial and social hierarchies. Yet, with their knowledge of Dutch culture and society, the women in this family asserted themselves despite the presence of their husband and father. In observing the family dynamic in combination with information from Oude Wijken Pastoraat workers and from Habiba herself, it became clear that the internal family dynamics had shifted in favour of Habiba, away from her husband, Ahmed, because of her contact with the Oude Wijken Pastoraat. An unseen result of this was that Ahmed no longer asserted physical control, in the form of violence, over his wife and children. Ahmed was clearly uncomfortable with the Oude Wijken Pastoraat workers, because their frequent presence underscored the new importance and power held by his wife and female children.

Anke, a worker at the Oude Wijken Pastoraat described this approach as "embedded intervention". It was based on the theologian Andries Baart's "presence theory" (Baart, 2004), a philosophy that provided assistance based only what was visible. Anke emphasised that the Pastoraat focussed on what could be *seen*, that is, what is *visible*. From this watchful knowledge of the neighbourhood, she and other workers would listen to residents and the combination of information from observation and listening provided the basis for action. She characterised this approach as *embedded intervention* emerging from presence theory, where the idea of presence is to acknowledge and be aware of the context, so that intervention takes place *within* a context. Habiba's case exemplified this two-pronged approach that was designed not to create wholesale change – not, for example, to take the radical step of encouraging Habiba to leave her husband, but instead offering her tools and assistance that allowed her to maintain elements of her culture and traditions while expanding her resources to allow her to assert herself in her relationship.

Another aspect of this observational approach was illustrated by the Oude Wijken Pastoraat somewhat surreptitious monitoring of several of the neighbourhood's elderly residents. In one case, Gerda, an elderly woman with diabetes, ate only chicken and bread, consuming all her supplies within two days of purchasing them and refusing to take any medication. Gerda had occasionally pretended to take medication because she wanted the approval of the Oude Wijken Pastoraat workers and Anke noted, Gerda thought that taking her medication was necessary to gain Anke's approval. However, at the same time Gerda was firm in asserting that she did not want to be in a hospital

or receive any kind of help. In reflecting on Gerda's situation, Anke said, "But that it is her life, and so she can make these decisions" (Anke, Oude Wijken Pastoraat, interview, March 15, 2007). She added that, in not permitting herself to be hospitalised, the woman was forcing the Oude Wijken Pastoraat to take responsibility for her (Gerda) rather than taking responsibility herself because the Pastoraat team would continue to check on her and Anke anticipated that one day they would go to Gerda's house only to find her dead, or seriously deteriorated. Anke mused that this was a great burden that Gerda was placing on Anke and her co-workers.

In the case of Rosalind, another elderly neighbourhood resident who was in her eighties, Anke extended her vigilance beyond Rosalind's residence. When visited, Rosalind would answer her door, but

> You could see inside that her house was dirty and full of things. But when you ask her, she always answers, 'Everything is fine.' I ask her, 'Can I come in?' But she says, 'No, no. Everything is fine, and I don't need anything.' So then I go to the supermarket when she does and then I can see her, just to make sure she is alright.
>
> *Anke, Oude Wijken Pastoraat, interview, March 15, 2007*

### *4.5.3. Connecting to the undocumented*

While language services were crucial to immigrants, both legal and illegal, organisations often provided additional services, more informally, to immigrants who were illegal or whose status was unclear. The OWP, for example, allowed its address to be used by illegal immigrants. As a port city, Rotterdam has seen an influx of mainland Chinese who have been smuggled into the Netherlands in shipping containers. Although this population is undocumented and tends to find work through ethnic ties that facilitate employment in the underground economy, there are some social services, particularly those related to child welfare that these individuals are able to access. However, access requires that the individual is registered at an address in Rotterdam; being registered positions them as residents of the city, permitting access to certain city administered resources. The process of obtaining a rental lease requires legal documentation of an individual's identity, legal permission to reside in the country and verification of income; this clearly creates a loop whereby undocumented populations cannot hold a formal lease and therefore cannot access social welfare resources. Predictably then, undocumented individuals become entrapped by slumlords and others who attempt to profit from their lack of paperwork by charging higher rents and poorer living conditions. Recognizing this cycle, the OWP suggests that these illegal workers use their address when attempting to access monetary assistance from social services that require a residential address, but not documentation of legal status. Because of the extensive use of the OWP's address, city records show that over 100 people, almost all of Chinese origin, live at the OWP's centre. The centre itself is a small, four room unit – one room is furnished as an office, another, as a kitchen, and

the last two as open spaces with tables and chairs – it is clear that this unit cannot act as a residential space, let alone for 100 people. These tactics are not unnoticed by the city government, but because of goodwill towards the OWP, officials turn a blind eye to them. In the case of these registrations, a city official visited the OWP's centre and after an extensive conversation with an OWP leader, in which the OWP was careful to neither admit nor deny that its address was being used by undocumented individuals, the official tacitly agreed to ignore the violation of 100 residents registered to a non-residential space and one clearly too small for such a large number of residents.

The OWP's informality and flexibility allow it unusual connections to a range of illegal activity. For example, over the last decade, police teams monitoring human trafficking noticed an increase in the number of Chinese women in unregulated prostitution[6], but they were unable to track the source and travel patterns of the women. OWP workers were also aware of this influx in Chinese women as they saw more of these women using their services, noticing too that some women had children with them but men seemed entirely absent. OWP workers encountered certain women repeatedly and in inquiring about their children and attempting to offer them assistance they would glean various pieces of information. Connections between the women would emerge, as well as information on how they were connected; this would point to the men who were running the sex trade as well as to where the flows and nodes of the trade were. Which cities and towns the women had passed through and who had arranged these movements would eventually become apparent. Together these pieces of information provided a clearer picture of the women's movements, both as they were passed between pimps and as they attempted to escape violence at the hands of those pimps as well as violence of other kinds in their underground world. The police sought out the OWP's assistance because of their informally gained knowledge and so in consultation with the OWP were able to gain some understanding of the patterns of trafficking and the flow of trafficked women into and out of Rotterdam[7].

The Missionaries of Charity offered a service that was similarly valued by the city, in part, because the city's own legislation prevented government agencies from offering the same service. Despite their avowed poverty, the nuns at the Missionaries of Charity found the resources to occupy one house and run a women's shelter in another house. The nuns deliberately limited their interaction and knowledge of Dutch society and of Rotterdam, as they viewed secular society as undesirable and as containing the potential to interfere with their theological obeisance. In wilfully separating themselves from the society in which they

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[6] Since prostitution is legal in the Netherlands, it was not the activity itself – which is heavily regulated and taxed in the same manner as any legal business – but rather the fact that the activity was taking place *outside* regulated spaces and businesses that drew police attention.

[7] The Oude Wijken Pastoraat workers made clear to me that they did not participate to assist in criminalizing the women, but often the women had children with them, and the workers were willing to consult with police in order to assist with the safety of the children.

are embedded, yet also seeking to be of social use, the nuns have inadvertently come to occupy a key role in Rotterdam's informal economy of care. When the city passed legislation restricting the use of shelters to those who could produce identification papers, the nuns were unaware of the legislation and because of their separation from society, *remained* unaware of it. As a result of this piece of legislation, most organisations that provided shelter to the undocumented found themselves having to turn these individuals away for fear that they would come under city scrutiny and would lose government funding and support. Very quickly, it became known that the only shelter that would accept those without any paperwork, was the shelter run by the Missionaries of Charity and so other agencies would routinely refer people to them. The shelter is small and open only to women, so its capacity is limited and it fills up rapidly; yet, the city police along with various agencies that provide services to marginalised people regularly send undocumented and homeless individuals to the shelter. Like the OWP, the Missionaries of Charity were visited by a city official – the Mayor himself – because their provision of shelter was known to the city, but neither party broached the mechanics of gaining access to the shelter and therefore the nuns' lack of compliance allows for the nuns to continue to fill in a gap in city services that may be too messy for the *Gemeente* to acknowledge and manage.

## 4.6. NON-IMMIGRANTS

Although the organisations cast themselves as primarily assisting immigrants, many of their services were broader and included a range of services to non-immigrants, that is, indigenous Dutch, who were in need. Their focus continued to be on those at the margins of society and whose needs might not be met by government social services which are generally focussed on specific problems and limited to resolution-oriented interactions. Surprisingly, it was a congregation that had the most ambitious program: the New Life Church established a drug rehabilitation program. When purchasing its church building, New Life sought a building that could accommodate its worship needs, but also one that was close to houses that could be purchased. The church bought three buildings adjacent to the church building and uses these buildings to house recovering drug addicts. As part of this special outreach to drug addicts, New Life also hosted a festive dinner once a year, which was open to anyone in Rotterdam; in practise, these attendees were those on the margins of society. New Life would notify drug addicts, alcoholics, prostitutes and others similarly on society's margins and drive out vans to pick them up and take them to a generous dinner hosted at New Life's facilities. The purpose of this effort was to offer these struggling individuals an opportunity to enjoy a festive meal, at a time when they might be especially alone because they were rejected by family and were generally socially isolated due to their addictions. Proselytizing was also a factor; however, because New Life coupled religious conversion with addiction recovery, the offer of assistance was also necessarily an offer of an opportunity to convert to Pentecostal Christianity.

The efforts of other organisations were equally focussed on the socially marginalised and isolated. KSA attempted to create a social network for isolated individuals through volunteer opportunities and through programs. They noted that their volunteers were older ethnic Dutch residents who were typically without close family and who needed social outlets. A program of home care and social visits was in place for those similarly isolated but with limited mobility; and in their most unusual program geared towards increasing individual social ties, KSA created a travel program for people who did not want to holiday by themselves. The OWP also used home visits, as well as creating events where isolated neighbourhood residents could meet others. In a country where eating an evening meal alone is the ultimate sign of social isolation, the OWP facilitated a dinner club that allowed people to meet at the OWP facilities, simply to share a meal. Each of these programs was designed to create spaces for individuals to connect with each other and decrease social isolation. However, the programs were not simply about creating sites that the socially marginalised were expected to manage by themselves, but rather the events were run by social workers, volunteers and pastors who acted as models. The individuals who were accustomed to social isolation often lacked the basic knowledge and ability to create social bonds; these spaces then became managed sites where those who had social skills would model appropriate interaction and behaviour for those who did, and would manage interactions between them in order to facilitate the creation of social bonds.

## 4.7. EMBEDDING IN THE NEIGHBOURHOOD

In Chapter 2, in the discussion of theoretical considerations, it was noted that these organisations in Rotterdam linked residents primarily to a national identity, however, several organisations also emphasised their embeddedness in the neighbourhood. A more detailed discussion of the ways in which organisations navigated the scale of place will follow in Chapter 6; this section will review how the organisations conceptualised their connection to neighbourhood. For the Oude Wijken Pastoraat and the House of Hope in particular, their choice of location and focus was closely connected to neighbourhood; for the New Life Church, although their selection of neighbourhood was inadvertent, they saw their neighbourhood location as an important element in their mission.

The Oude Wijken Pastoraat – as indicated by their name, "Old Pastoral Districts" – was focussed on the older neighbourhoods of central Rotterdam. The Middelland neighbourhood where one of the Pastoraat's offices was located, was illustrative of these older central city areas. Middelland has been consistently identified as a "problem neighbourhood" (*probleemwijk*) by the Dutch Ministry of Housing, Spatial Planning and the Environment[8] (Ministerie van Volkshuisvesting, Ruimtelijke Ordening en Milieu,

[8] Ministerie van Volkshuisvesting, Ruimtelijke Ordening en Milieu known by its Dutch initials, VROM.

2009). Neighbourhoods receive "problem neighbourhood" status due to infrastructure problems, higher crime rates, higher concentrations of poverty among other factors. West Kruiskade which becomes Middellandstraat is the main thoroughfare running through the neighbourhood of Middelland; the street's retail outlets are the most immediate indicator of its place as an immigrant zone. Chinese grocery stores, Indian convenience stores and Surinamese jewellery outlets are prominent along with a sprinkling of Moroccan and Turkish businesses. Several internet and long distance telephone outlets emphasise the neighbourhood's transnational ties. Middelland's inhabitants are largely ethnic minorities; only 37% of its residents are ethnically Dutch (Table 4.3). Its streets are dominated by ethnic minorities and the ethnic Dutch are primarily seen biking *through* the neighbourhood on their way to the city centre. The area is literally more colourful – shop windows and signage display a range of unco-ordinated colours and styles – and less orderly than the city centre which is dominated by higher end retail stores. Because the built environment in the Netherlands is subjected to highly centralised and controlled plans and maintenance, the sense of slight disorder in Middelland stands out and suggests a gap in state control. Walking through Middelland in the daytime while the retail sector is active, the area seems as safe and ordinary a neighbourhood as any other in Rotterdam, although it is clearly distinctive as an immigrant enclave. However, after the main retail activity subsides, in the late afternoon and early evening, neighbourhood activity shifts and Middelland becomes a site of less ordinary transactions. Middelland is conveniently accessed from highways that link the Netherlands and Belgium and so it has become a meeting site for Belgians seeking out drugs and the Dutch residents who sell them. Evenings in Middelland bring young men who lurk in doorways waiting to sell their goods or make contact with customers driving through the city and link them to the end supplier.

**Table 4.3.** Middelland residents

| | Non-Western immigrants (%) | Western immigrants (%) | Native Dutch (%) |
|---|---|---|---|
| Middelland | 49 | 13 | 37 |

Sources:
Gemeentelijke Basis Administratie (GBA)
CBS Regionaal Inkomensonderzoek (Statistical Netherlands)

The House of Hope and New Life Church were both located south of Rotterdam's central neighbourhoods, across the harbour, in Tarwewijk. Like Middelland, the Tarwewijk neighbourhood has been consistently identified as a "problem neighbourhood" in Ministry of Housing, Spatial Planning and the Environment's yearly reports. Entering Tarwewijk the street becomes visibly immigrant: as in Midelland, one encounters many visible ethnic

minorities and fewer ethnic Dutch. The retail streetscape reflects this: instead of chains or large retail spaces, shops are frequently small, often ethnically specific convenience stores or *tokos*, long distance calling centres are common as are shops selling extremely cheap consumer goods. Unlike Middelland, the streets of Tarwewijk are clean and apart from the retail presence, residential structures do not seem especially distinct from other neighbourhoods. Perhaps the clearest visible difference in the Tarwewijk residences is that most windows have curtains which are drawn, preventing those outside from looking into the house; this lies in contrast to the dominant Dutch practise of uncovered windows allowing unobstructed views into households at all times of day and night. Notable, however, is the lack of bikes, bike racks and even bike traffic. Unlike Middelland, which many ride through in order to reach the city's retail centre, Tarwewijk is not on the way to another desirable location and so it is not used as a bike route; like Middelland, those on bikes are usually the white Dutch. In addition to the lack of bikes, there are fewer cafes with their accompanying beer signage and in public, mixed gender groups of people and gatherings seem rare. All these indicators reflected the neighbourhood's ethnic and cultural make up, as well its high level of low income residents.

**Table 4.4.** Tarwewijk residents

| | Non-Western immigrants (%) | Western immigrants (%) | Native Dutch (%) |
|---|---|---|---|
| Tarwewijk | 63 | 9 | 27 |

Source:
Gemeentelijke Basis Administratie (GBA)

At New Life, which had previously been located near the city's central train station, the move to Tarwewijk was accidental:

> [We] didn't choose to come here. [We] got forced into it, by God. Because we were up north, we were at the central station and we loved it there. We definitely didn't want to come to south – but now we are here, we are seeing the reason *why* we're here. And we see potential in the *wijk* – and someone need to reach out to these people because there's a lot of needy people here and I believe God called us to help to reach out and help those people.
>
> *Alfred, New Life Church, interview, November 3, 2009*

Although initially uncertain about Tarwewijk, New Life committed itself to the neighbourhood and engaged in structured outreach:

> I sat like I sit with you, I sat with different *stadsmariniers* [district leaders], the police and I'm explaining to them, we're here and listen, we are one of the biggest companies in this

> neighborhood – we're a church, but we have that many people that really, I mean, people that have been inspired, they come to church because they want to hear, they want to be inspired. And what we also notice a lot of *ondernemers* [entrepreneurs] young business men, are starting and that's good. We're going to have a meeting with all those business men – people with negotiation. so that's a good sign in the church, because also we wanted to start like *uitzendburo* [employment agency].
>
> *Alfred, New Life Church, interview, November 3, 2009*

They cast these efforts as fundamental to neighbourhood change, because in contrast to the city, their attention was focused on residents rather than physical structures:

> There's certain things that need to change because everybody – and the thing is this is how the city looks if we put those people in new houses then the neighbourhood will change – no, no the neighbourhood will not change if the people don't change. you can get them and you can put them in a new house, but if the mentality doesn't change, and if the character doesn't change – and that's where we play a vital part in, of course, you can't force people to come to church – but my God we can stand for ethics we play a vital part in this neighbourhood not only, in the whole city.
>
> *Alfred, New Life Church, interview, November 3, 2009*

Similarly, Tarwewijk's designation as a "problem neighbourhood" and the higher spatial concentration of residents at the social margins drew the House of Hope to the neighbourhood. Although the organisation now has locations in several other marginalized neighbourhoods, the Tarwewijk centre was its first location. The organisation's web site characterises itself as designed to "create more life in the neighbourhood" as an antidote to a 2001 municipal report that stated that "there are six churches in the Tarwewijk, but none of them has social relevance for the neighbourhood". Noting that

> 63 per cent of the 11,000 inhabitants are foreign. There exists a large amount of social need, family problems, unemployment and housing need, forming an 'attention area' of the sub municipality. (House of Hope web site)

The House of Hope further emphasises its connectedness to place through its slogan, "At home in the South". Their characterization of Tarwewijk suggests a neighbourhood that is blank and requires re-creation; in Chapter 6, the implications of this representation will be discussed further.

## 4.8. "WE'RE RELIGIOUS BUT IT'S A MATTER OF DEFINITION"

> "We are a Christian organisation and we don't hide it, but we don't cry it out,"
>
> *Gerrit, OWP, interview, June 11, 2009*

The question of "why religion?" is a recurring one within a secular discourse and a society that perceives itself as largely secular. As noted earlier, if secularization causes religion to privatize, to recede from the public sphere, why does religion matter? The fact remains that despite these shifts and the pressure of declining church attendance, religion still persists; it no longer overwhelms the social landscape, but neither has it disappeared. Why are there religious organisations in the heart of one of the most secular countries in the world? Answering this question can be challenging for secularists, but interestingly, discerning the role and value of religion was also often challenging for those *within* the FBOs. Each characterized the role of religion differently and even FBOs of similar types diverged in their views.

The organisations that focussed on community services struggled most with finding relevance for religion within themselves and indeed within the services they performed. For the OWP and House of Hope, both Christian organisations, their existence was explained by the Biblical exhortation from the book of Matthew,

> For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me
>
> *(Matt. 25: 35-36 New International Version).*

The ways in which they sought to help individuals were prescribed by the Christian impetus to care for people in need. At the same time, for the members of these organisations, this explanation was not completely satisfying as many noted that they would be engaged in this kind of community service regardless of whether their organisation was religious. One individual noted that his reasons for choosing a religious organisation with which to engage in community service activities were also amorphous and it was a legacy of tradition and upbringing rather than a specific desire to work within a religious context.

> [I work here] because my mother passed on to me—to embrace also the Catholic sense of things. That's right; I think that's really that. Because you're educated with the Bible and the figure of Jesus and all these stories and your family and so on..... And I find still this is the best way up to now. If I find a better way, okay, I'll go for it, but up until now I don't find it.
>
> *Gerrit, OWP, interview, June 11, 2009*

Another noted that she was looking for work when her pastor suggested the House of Hope as a place that could use her skills, but she described her connection to the organisation as primarily a place to practise her profession, rather than a workplace where religion had particular import. Repeatedly, it seemed that what mattered was that the individuals themselves were religious rather than the organisation.

Yet, each organisation's religiosity was also identified as an element in *how* its activities were carried out. The elements of trust, accessibility and the interest in and capability to build long-term relationships were recurring themes tied to the *faith*-based nature of the group. Trust based on the group's religiosity was commonly expressed by those of other religions too: "for instance, people of the Moroccan community, they come here and say okay, because you are religious too, so we can discuss things with you" (Gerrit, OWP, interview, June 11, 2009). Although the organisations were very aware of the relationship between trust and their status as faith-derived, this awareness was not without ambivalence: "People have trusted us because we are a Christian organisation. And also Muslim people who come to us" but at the same time, this worker was perplexed at this reasoning, adding, "It isn't anything…but for people that's a kind of feeling that they have" (Hanny, KSA, interview, September 16, 2009). For the Muslim organisation, De Tafel and the Hindu, Dharma, religion was seen as instrumental to members of their community accessing services and resources. De Tafel admitted to shifting positions as needed, "Sometimes we say we're a secular organisation, but we have a religious identity, but anyway that's a matter of definition", but also suggested that being religious meant, "we have something to add, which another secular organisation wouldn't do" (Katje, De Tafel, interview, June 18, 2009).

The organisations were most comfortable when trust and religion were expressed in action: in addition to facilitating trust building, religion was seen to motivate relationships that were holistic and long-term. One respondent noted that they were "seen as an enthusiastic and positive organisation because the human being is completely central and there is no bureaucracy" (Els, House of Hope, interview, March 16, 2007); this differentiated them from secular organisations because secular organisations required that people have specific problems that meet the criteria that the organisation is designed to address. In contrast, the religious impetus to view people as whole human beings allowed the organisations to offer assistance in across many different areas and meant that the interaction did not have to be confined to the resolution of a specific problem or set of problems. The community service organisations in particular, viewed the process of building the relationship as an important process for their clients to engage in *as a process* and *as an end in itself*, rather than a means to another end. Implicit in this assertion was the assumption that their constituents needed practise and training in relationship building. One respondent emphasised that the visibility of the relationship was important: "most of the time it goes further. Then people can *see* [that] it is a relationship, building up and then it goes until death follows. It's a long relationship" (Gerrit, OWP, interview, June 11, 2009) [emphasis mine]. Another suggested that long and holistic relationships were especially important for children, as childhood was the moment when positive influences could have the most effect:

> And of course, once you take them from kids, you got to walk them through the process. Once they become a teenager, you got to facilitate them and then guide them. Because

> everybody is scared – at the moment something happens, everybody shouts and then they want to go and solve it, but you got to start from the beginning.
>
> *Alfred, New Life Church, interview, November 3, 2009*

While religion was used to promote trust, it was also downplayed, particularly in an organisations' physical environment. The OWP has four locations; each is embedded within the neighbourhood, literally and figuratively. From the outside, the locations do not stand out as spaces that are religiously connected, they are non-descript, blending with the surrounding housing units and noticeable only in so far as there are a few small posters in the windows (Figure 4.3). With doors usually closed, a lack of signage, and curtains and posters obscuring the activity inside, the OWP could easily be mistaken for a café, in the Dutch sense of a pub or bar. At the Sint Mariastraat site, one enters into a large room that is set up like an inexpensive café or cafeteria dining room. The space contains several tables with chairs covered with table cloths and at first glance it is uncertain exactly what the purpose of the space is. The impression of a café is compounded by the clear view into the next room where kitchen counters set up with a coffee pot, trays and other miscellany are clearly visible. Finally, one might notice a small cross set in a niche in the corner of the large room; the only clue as to the underpinnings of the space. The

**Figure 4.3.** The OWP Unie on Sint Mariastraat is on the left.

absence of religious signifiers are a deliberate choice. Although the OWP's leadership is comprised of ministers or former ministers whose clerical training is extensive, they exhibit an unexpected resistance to overt religious display. Typically, one religious service a week is conducted by a member of the leadership – even in their titles, they avoid using the honorific associated with their ordained status.
Similarly, the House of Hope also tends to eschew religious signifiers:

> We would like to be kind of neutral. Even we are not having Christian music especially for that reason. It's because we would like to have everybody beside us so they can be supported.
>
> *Els, House of Hope, interview, March 16, 2007*

As might be expected, the organisations that were primarily congregational groups saw a straight line between religion and their own activities. In these groups, their primary role was to create spaces of worship and to facilitate religious knowledge and learning among their members.

## 4.9. SUMMARY

In this chapter, I examined several faith-based organisations in Rotterdam, exploring key activities and the ways in which they placed themselves in relation to the populations they serve. In turning to Rotterdam, I was struck by how often the assertion of the Netherlands as a largely secular country Dutch secularity was at odds with the number of faith-based organisations in the city and their broad knowledge of Rotterdam and its needs. Yet, of course, as I will discuss later in Chapter 6, the rhetoric of Dutch secularism sometimes created a sense of confusion for those who worked in faith-based organisations, causing them to wonder as much as anyone else, what difference their religion made.

Guided by the research questions: why do faith-based organisations exist in Rotterdam? What do they do? How do they do it?, this chapter has provided a view into the complexities of faith as an envelope that frames institutional efforts and as an element that overlaps with and intersects with secular activities. The organisations revealed that place was an important component of their character: they situated themselves in Rotterdam and in particular for reasons to do with the spatial clustering of inequality, immigrants and exclusion. Each of these elements will be analysed in greater detail in Chapter 6, where their actions and motivations will be reflected upon in particular in comparison with faith-based organisations in Philadelphia. Having gained an understanding of faith-based organisations in Rotterdam, let us now turn to Philadelphia in the following chapter.

# 5 (RE)MAKING SECULAR COMMUNITIES THROUGH THE LENS OF RELIGION IN PHILADELPHIA

We turn now to the city of Philadelphia which differs from Rotterdam but also bears striking similarities to it, despite their divergent national contexts. In contrast to the Netherlands, religion in the U.S. is a mainstream and commonplace preoccupation. Political rhetoric and a generally moralised discourse places talk of religion and belief at the centre of American society; the degree to which religion is used as the scaffolding for social policy and action is, however, debatable. The relationship between rhetoric and action in terms of role of religion is circuitous and often confused; as this chapter will illustrate the lack of clarity between these two elements creates fuzzy spaces in which faith-based organisations engage in religiously-motivated social activity.

Faith-based organisations in Philadelphia were highly localised and neighbourhood dependent. Unlike Rotterdam, there was no central church council or strong local government that provided an impetus for centralisation, strong-intergroup links and coalitions. Unlike Rotterdam, Philadelphia's faith-based groups were not strongly formalised in their inter-organisational links, structures and services. In order to adapt to this context, four organisations were selected for in-depth interviews and observation; this adaptation allowed for a view into the organisations and an understanding of the spatial context that was most important to them, their neighbourhoods. In this chapter, I will first provide a short introduction to the city of Philadelphia and then review each organisation and the ways in which they create and occupy the spaces of religiously-motivated social activity.

## 5.1. AN INTRODUCTION TO PHILADELPHIA

Philadelphia is one of the oldest cities in the U.S., established by William Penn in the late 18th century as a utopian experiment designed to permit the freedom of religion. Penn was a Quaker (also known as the Society of Friends) and sought to establish a city where Quakers and others could practise their religion freely. Philadelphia quickly became home to many groups and denominations escaping religious persecution and conformity in Europe. Emerging from London, the prototypical dirty, crowded and chaotic city, Penn's view of the city as it existed was unsympathetic; rather than re-creating or facilitating the problems of 17th century European cities, Penn's vision of the city was closer to the garden city model that would follow two centuries later – suggesting a melding of the vitality and compactness of a city, mitigated by green space, structure and order. He laid Philadelphia out in a grid emerging on an East-West axis from a port on the Delaware River (now called Penn's Landing). While the order and openness of Penn's plan was shortly undermined by the influx new residents resulting in the density and crowdedness that Penn had attempted to avoid, the fundamental grid structure was maintained and became the model for most planned U.S. cities. In Philadelphia, this has meant a grid framework with irregular infilling in the form of narrow streets and alleys to facilitate density. The social result has been a city with many neighbourhoods, with the character of residents and neighbourhood changing almost from block to block. Philadelphians describe their city as one where neighbourhoods are self-contained, and also often very small.

Despite the centrality of its port, Philadelphia, unlike Boston and New York did not become a primary destination for immigrants. From its establishment in the 18th century until the present, Philadelphia has been a secondary immigrant destination – that is, it is not a gateway, but is more likely to be the second or third stop on an immigrant's journey (Singer, 2004). Its immigrant population has been consistently lower than either of the two Eastern seaboard gateways, and far more mixed. Where 19th century Boston was dominated by the Irish, and 19th century New York by the Irish and Italians, 19th century Philadelphia hosted both these groups, as well as Poles and other Eastern Europeans, and in the 20th and 21st centuries, Africans, Latinos and Asians are almost equally present in the city's immigrant mix. Like many American cities then, Philadelphia has been shaped by its immigrant populations, but the fact that it was not dominated by a single group meant that both in city politics and in the nature of its neighbourhoods, immigrants have a *negotiated* rather than a contested co-existence with each other, as well as African-Americans and deracinated white elites. In this, the city is unusual: most U.S. cities have been dominated by particular immigrant groups that are then replaced by other groups that come to dominate – paralleling, at the city scale, the processes of neighbourhood succession where enclaves transfer from one immigrant group to another, then to African-Americans, sometimes followed by gentrification and redevelopment. In avoiding this model of successive invasion (Abrahamson, 2000; Portes & Manning, 2005), the city has

become a space where multiple groups negotiate and share space by creating distinctive and often closed (or at least heavily bounded) neighbourhoods.

Even in its economy, Philadelphia displayed the hallmarks of a city of the middle ground. Perhaps due to its Quaker roots, Philadelphia was a city with a high degree of homogeneity: this was manifested both in its built environment and in the income of its residents. The dominance of industry and factories created an essentially working class city, with a structure of low income inequality. Factory workers were a well-paid, semi-specialised labour force, living and working in closed circles. Deindustrialisation in mid- to late-20th century Philadelphia resulted in manufacturing sector losses, these sectors were replaced with knowledge and service sectors[1] (Dilworth, 2006) that create large and persistent income inequality. In its built environment, it is a city of row houses: inexpensive, space efficient structures built to accommodate an industrial working class.



In many respects Philadelphia lies between the extremes manifested in many American cities: it has suffered the setbacks of deindustrialisation, but its position is not irrevocable. Unlike Cleveland or Buffalo, it contains a healthy dose of immigrants, but is not an immigrant gateway in the manner of Boston or New York nor is it dominated by particular ethnicities or regions; and it is a city with a city government whose efficacy is marginal but in the change of administrations, imbued with hope. As a city in between, Philadelphia embodies elements that are common in the economically struggling cities of Cleveland and Rochester, as well the successful cities of San Francisco and New York.

Contemporary Philadelphia lies between its roots as a solidly working class city with high employment and distributed prosperity, and a future of widening income gaps and inequity that is increasingly typical of the modern cities responding to the transformations of globalisation. The worst effects of deindustrialisation have been recognised and the city has already begun to address the visible problems of deindustrialisation's economic and population loss: blight has been identified as a major challenge, and over the last decade, the city has demolished almost 8,000 properties of the 26,000 that comprised the city's abandoned housing stock (McGovern, 2006).

However, the social effects of the sectoral shifts including an increase in economic inequality, population drain to the suburbs, persistent unemployment, homelessness, poor schools, and high crime rates, have less straightforward solutions and these factors have combined to result in deep and persistent poverty. Because the city developed along strong neighbourhood boundaries, these social effects have similarly followed existing neighbourhood patterns and the city displays uneven spatial distribution of these effects. The result is a city of neighbourhoods each of which has distinctive demographic and social characteristics.

[1] Primarily health, insurance and education.

## 5.2. A HUNDRED NEIGHBOURHOODS IN SEARCH OF A CITY

Philadelphians are connected to their neighbourhoods as spaces where they live, where they go to school and sometimes where they work but also as spaces that give them an identity. Residents' identities are a reflection of the neighbourhood in which they grew up or in which they live and so a Philadelphian will characterise themselves as being from South Philly, West Philly, Bella Vista, and so on. In a city with an uneven infrastructure and a settlement history that varies according to block, neighbourhood identification can impart information about one's ethnicity, class and tenure in the city. This connection to neighbourhood as well as the distinctiveness of each neighbourhood makes it useful for us to gain a better understanding of the neighbourhoods in which these faith-based organisations are based. Of the four organisations examined in this study, two were based in West Philadelphia, one was based in the Northeast and the fourth was based in Kensington although it had a city-wide focus.

West Philadelphia is the region of the city that is west of the Schuykill River; in the early 20th century it was a streetcar suburb of Center City, Philadelphia's downtown and business core. Initially home to a well-paid, primarily African-American, working class, the area has suffered under the late 20th century processes of deindustrialisation leaving a neighbourhood that retains its predominantly working class character but that has high levels of unemployment and significant blight and abandonment in its residential blocks. Surprisingly, this visible disinvestment lies adjacent to two wealthy private universities, the University of Pennsylvania and Drexel University. The wealth of these universities has been held close to the universities' campuses, but over the last 10 years, the University of Pennsylvania has been expanding the boundaries of its influence; as a result the blocks immediately adjacent to the university house middle-class and wealthier residents, while areas west of 50th Street continue to be sites of disinvestment and blight. Moving west from the University of Pennsylvania campus, one experiences three distinct streetscapes: first, the well-tended and wealthier section that abuts the university, followed by a small band of gentrification spilling westward in a dispersed fashion, and finally buildings and streets in disrepair. Figure 5.1 draws on residential sales figures from 2007 to illustrate this shift.

Although out-migration is the dominant trend in this area, a small but significant in-migration has occurred: African immigrants have increasingly settled in West Philadelphia. The African immigrants in West Philadelphia come primarily from East and West Africa; and while I was not able to locate estimates of their religious affiliation, many of the African immigrants are visibly Muslim – with women wearing *burqas* and headscarves – and there are at least two Muslim community centres in the neighbourhood. Traditional churches in elaborate stone neo-Gothic styles are widespread, as are churches that have made storefronts or residential buildings their home. The thinning of West Philadelphia's population base, and its continuing economic struggle that have resulted in a story with the threads of a classic disinvestment cycle – the loss of jobs leading to a loss of people,

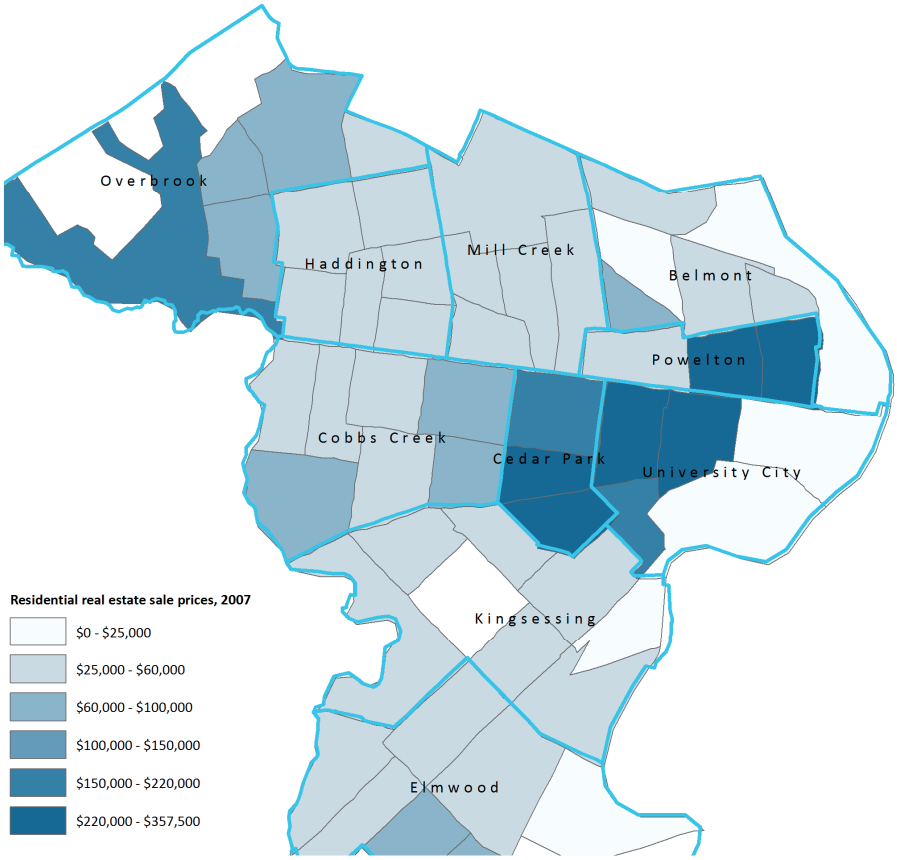


**Figure 5.1.** Map of West Philadelphia. Housing prices illustrate relationship to university-driven wealth. Source: City of Philadelphia, Board of Revision of Taxes. Generated using the Philadelphia Neighborhood Information System, Cartographic Modeling Laboratory, University of Pennsylvania, http://cml.upenn.edu/nbase/.

and eventually infrastructure decay and institutional flight – increase the prominence of churches, as they are one of few institutions that remain in a neighbourhood under stress.

## 5.3. OVERVIEW OF THE ORGANISATIONS

These shifts were especially relevant to the neighbourhoods and organisations with which I conducted my research. Two of the organisations are in West Philadelphia, one is in the Northeast and the last is a city-wide organisation. In West Philadelphia were the Association of Islamic Charitable Projects (AICP) and the Cedar Mennonite church; both were situated between a zone of recent gentrification and an area that lost its stable working class base with de-industrialization and is now spotted with abandoned buildings

and intermittent and illicit street activity. AICP is a national Islamic organisation but its presence and congregational activities in West Philadelphia have had strong local effects, transforming its environs through its local activities. Cedar Mennonite is a congregation, focussed largely on the rituals of worship; however, Cedar Mennonite members see themselves as theologically driven to engage with the community around them. This theological imperative prompted the establishment of an affordable housing initiative, to be addressed in greater detail later in this chapter.

In the second neighbourhood in Northeast Philadelphia, I examined Roosevelt Mennonite church. The Northeast area of Philadelphia is an area that is primarily residential and until 10 years ago, its residents were typically white, working-class and of Irish Catholic extraction; its newer residents are African-Americans, Latinos and immigrants from Russia and Eastern Europe. The method of snowballing brought Roosevelt Mennonite to my attention; the choice to include a second Mennonite church was the result of the church's activities which were clearly engaging with their neighbourhood and community in a distinctive and unusual manner. The last organisation included in this study was the Eastern Pennsylvania Organizing Project (EPOP), an issue-based inter-denominational organisation intended to stimulate community activism on particular issues. EPOP is modelled on Alinsky-style organising and actively engaged with secular organisations on secular issues, often through religious channels.

Each of these organisations was attempting to mitigate social fragmentation and re-build a sense of community. Strikingly, each of them combined the social and spatial, creating impacts on the physical and spatial elements of their environment while responding to specific social issues faced by marginalized populations. Table 5.1 provides a summary of the key characteristics of these organisations. In the remainder of the chapter, I will examine the organisations' specific programs in greater depth.

## 5.4. "A BULWARK AGAINST GENTRIFICATION"

Cedar Mennonite lies at the edge of the University City district. This location places it between two parts of West Philadelphia in two different stages of gentrification. As noted in section 5.2, from the University of Pennsylvania, west to approximately 50th Street is an area of somewhat advanced gentrification: within this area, the section immediately adjacent to the university is completely gentrified, with higher housing prices and a retail sector that caters to economically well-off students, professors and others who work at the university. This effort is institutionally supported by the University of Pennsylvania through subsidies to the University City District agency, favourable mortgages to university staff and various other incentive programs. In striking contrast, west of 50th Street, housing prices drop precipitously (see Figure 5.1) due to blight, abandonment, poorer residents and other markers of disinvestment and marginalization. Looking eastward from the church, the neighbourhood appears economically stable and well-maintained, yet looking

Table 5.1. Organisation characteristics

| Organisation | Religion | Programs | Definition of community |
|---|---|---|---|
| Association of Islamic Charitable Projects (AICP) | Muslim | Adult classes in Islam<br>Community centre<br>Islamic elementary school | Based on specific theological beliefs; that is, Islamic adherents only. |
| EPOP | Inter-denominational | One-on-one meetings<br>Partnerships with non-religious organisations<br>Issue-based resident education and mobilization | City residents, regardless of documented status |
| Cedar Mennonite | Christian | Affordable housing (Beaumont Initiative) | Church members and residents of the neighbourhood defined as within walking distance of the church. |
| Roosevelt Mennonite | Christian | Community development association<br>Community festival<br>Providing space for alcohol and drug recovery group meetings<br>Summer camp for children | Church members and residents of the neighbourhood defined as within 10 block of the church. |

westward, the neighbourhood is characterised by abandonment, poverty and a sense of instability. Church members were acutely aware of their position at the edge of westward moving gentrification efforts; this awareness derived in part from difficulties church members encountered in finding affordable housing when prices were being pushed higher by gentrification. It derived too, from visible shifts in the built environment and the population. In the built environment, gentrification brought active retail outlets including coffee shops and restaurants, in addition to well-maintained houses and an infrastructure (such as roads and sewers) that received attention. But gentrification was also apparent demographically: the gentrifiers were predominantly white, skewing towards the young, and middle-class; in contrast, the longer term residents of the neighbourhood were African-American, older and generally poor. This awareness came to be expressed in a desire to act as a "bulwark against gentrification" (Melissa, interview, June 19, 2008), in particular via the establishment of an affordable housing program called the Beaumont Initiative[2]. The process of establishing this program, determining who should benefit from

[2] The name of this initiative is taken from the street on which the program's housing units are located. The fact that this name is shared with a supervisor of this thesis is entirely coincidental and the two are unrelated.

it and the story of how this effort unfolded reveals many of the elements that make Cedar Mennonite notable. The remainder of this section, 5.4, will review the case of the Beaumont Initiative as it attempted to create community, enhance place attachment, and access state assistance.

### *5.4.1. Creating the Beaumont Initiative*

The idea of affordable housing emerged directly from housing difficulties members of the congregation were experiencing.

> And then in about 2003, there were a lot of young adults who were coming to Cedar Mennonite who wanted to buy homes and couldn't afford them. And…I was thinking, this is sad because that is the future of the congregation: younger people buying into the neighbourhood who were invested in the neighbourhood and who put in the energy of young adults.... And I found a lot of young adults, especially couples, talking about wanting to buy and not being able to afford it. And so I called a meeting of those folks and said, of course this was ridiculous because we can't afford homes, but there's so many vacant properties; what's wrong here? And so we talked about that – and my goodness they had energy! And they were meeting weekly and making plans and working on stuff. And you know, one of the first ideas seemed so absolutely preposterous: now let's find a block where there is a lot of vacant properties, we'll buy those and fix them up and we'll revitalize the block and create a little community. And that idea had so much energy. It really sucked as an idea – it doesn't empower the local *existing* residents people – who've lived there forever [emphasis in the original]. But anyway, that's what got us started. That energy about really making this a place to live. And we can revitalize an area and we can create a new kind of living community.
>
> *John, interview, May 22, 2008*

As this respondent makes clear, the group that began thinking about housing wanted to find housing that they could afford to own; they wanted to turn the abandoned properties in their neighbourhood into usable living spaces; and they also saw this effort as an opportunity to create and shape *community*. They began their endeavour in self-interest, approaching the issue of housing as a need *within* their congregation community and those involved were directly likely to benefit, as they would be the new owners of any rehabilitated housing.

> It got started because the housing prices were going up, it didn't start out as a humanitarian effort at all. It started out with some people trying to get houses – which it didn't really start out as a project to be of assistance to our fellow human beings at all. It didn't start out like that. As altruistic as it looks today…. So we thought what about all these abandoned houses – get our hands on some, rehab them. But pool our efforts so that we have a little more clout…coordinate our efforts in acquiring property from the

> city, getting the rehab work done. Things like that. So we figured just coordinating our efforts and having economies of scale might make everything easier. Simple as that.
>
> *Jacob, interview, June 10, 2008*



However, over a short time, this plan shifted from a focus on internal needs to an outward view into the community beyond the congregation. This change was driven in part by a realisation that church members could not ignore existing residents (as the informant quote on the previous page illustrates). The idea of creating a new community assumed the absence of an existing community, an assumption that was corrected as soon as the group began to seek out viable properties. They had two criteria: that the units would be abandoned – and therefore available for purchase from the city – and that they would be within a walkable distance of the church, a criterion they frequently used to define their neighbourhood and community. A block of Beaumont Avenue, located within easy walking distance of the church offered a mix of abandoned and boarded up houses and inhabited structures (Figure 5.2).

Built in typical Philadelphia row home style, houses shared walls and the structural integrity of each unit was dependent on the ones next to it. This interdependency makes


**Figure 5.2.** Abandoned and boarded up structures sit beside inhabited houses on Beaumont Ave. Source: Author's photograph.

abandoned and decaying structures a danger to inhabited and maintained neighbouring structures. Four units in the middle of the block were long abandoned and seemed to be viable candidates for the renovation efforts (Figure 5.3 shows the condition of the purchased units). The block as a whole seemed like a good location for a rehab effort: the abandoned units could be purchased cheaply and renovations would benefit other residents on the street because the enhanced structural integrity of the abandoned units would add to the structural integrity of existing inhabited units. But the idea of creating "a new kind of living community" (Jacob, interview, June 10, 2008) was tested when faced with the reality of addressing existing residents. Before buying the properties, the Cedar Mennonite group, recognising that they were entering into an existing community, attempted to gain an implicit permission from existing residents.

> We didn't want to be pioneers coming in and pushing out the native people and herd them on to a reservation. So we wanted to do this in such a way that we wanted to have the blessing of the people on the block.
>
> *Jacob, interview, June 10, 2008*

The concern about embarking on a kind of colonization was compounded by the visible differences between the congregation and the block residents. The group's awareness of and concern about a colonial dynamic underscored their emphasis on creating a connected community, "so then we tried to meet as many people on the block as we could. And there was a problem with this, because we're a white congregation and it's largely a black block" (Jacob, interview, June 10, 2008). Recognizing that "the blessing" of residents did not nullify their position as an outside group, they sought to expand their membership to include members of a nearby African-American church as well as attempting to draw block residents into participating and steering the rehab effort. These efforts were met with mixed success: in the end, the African-American church yielded only one consistent participant; while the residents of the block itself had a range of complex reactions, which will be discussed later in this section.

The other driver of a change in focus from housing for congregation members to a more general affordable housing effort was the discovery that any government assistance available required distance from the eventual owners of the houses. That is, state assistance could not be accessed if it was intended for one's own property development. As one respondent noted, accessing government funds was appealing because it potentially opened up wider opportunities:

> The more we got into it, the more we realized that – we found out there was a lot of money available from city programs, etc. for people who were making a low-income housing available – low-income home buying opportunities available. And we kind of thought, maybe instead of, maybe getting houses for ourselves, we should be taking

> advantage of this and providing some kind of opportunity for people who need it. So that's when the focus shifted.
>
> *Jacob, interview, June 10, 2008*

Although this now meant that the members of the group would not directly benefit – that is, they would not be able to buy or rent the housing that they were trying to rehab – and their own struggle with finding affordable housing would not be resolved, their effort was worthwhile because "even if it didn't fix the problem for ourselves, it might make a dent in a kind of structural issue" (Lindsey, interview, June 28, 2008).



The block that they selected, located on Beaumont Avenue, lent its name to the non-profit group the Cedar Mennonite congregants established, called the Beaumont Initiative. The organisation was formalised as a 501(c)(3)[3] and they began to search for funding to purchase the units and begin the rehab process. In becoming a 501(c)(3) it became an organisation formally detached from the Cedar Mennonite church, although the Beaumont Initiative members continued to be largely drawn from the church. The separation allowed the Beaumont Initiative to apply for state and city funds because the organisation was now formally secular rather than religious. Despite now being eligible to apply, the Initiative had little success in being selected to receive monies. It was largely donations from private individuals that provided the $12,000 needed to purchase each unit at the city Sherriff's Sale. Possession of the units meant moving onto the construction phase and a need for technical expertise to negotiate city codes and to manage the technical aspects of bolstering the structural shell and building the interiors. Lacking this technical expertise internally or the funds to hire a technical expert to assist them, they used contacts with other churches to identify a congregation that could contribute this expertise. These faith-based networks yielded technical expertise and drew the interest of another neighbourhood congregation, Resurrection.

The Resurrection church was interested in participating in the Beaumont Initiative by contributing congregants' time towards rebuilding the units. This idea was partly derived from the well-known Habitat for Humanity model, where Habitat provides materials and technical knowledge, while volunteers provide free labour (Fuller, 1994). The model is designed to reduce the costs of construction by depending on free, if inexpert, labour while providing groups with an opportunity to take social action that also enhances their intra-group cohesion; for this latter reason, Habitat for Humanity is well-known and popular among congregations. Working as a group on a construction project for a day or a weekend serves as a group formation and bonding activity. For the Resurrection

[3] 501(c)(3) refers to the section of the U.S. Internal Revenue Code that permits particular charitable organisations to have tax-exempt status. The designation is commonly used in the U.S. to refer to registered non-profits, just as the term "stichting" is used in the Netherlands.

church assisting with the Beaumont renovation would fulfil a theological imperative to make a social contribution and also allow congregants an opportunity to strengthen internal congregational bonds. For the Beaumont Initiative, this would be an opportunity to reduce their labour costs, in part because their own church was small and could not offer a large pool of labour, but they also viewed it as an opportunity to build partnerships with other faith-based groups. While these motivations might indicate that work days would be primarily beneficial to all concerned, the work days had the unintended effect of emphasising that it was "outsiders" who were involved the rehab project. This was in part because of the very visible differences between the work group and long-term block residents and in part because the latter keep their distance from the project as a whole. The differences that were visible were primarily those of ethnicity: Resurrection church was primarily ethnically Asian-American and white, while the block residents were African-American.

> The day we had a volunteer clean-up day – Resurrection church, which is mostly Asian – showed up. I mean they were great, they were great workers, they're really nice people… There were a couple, I think, reactions that came out of that. It was partly, like, why are there so many volunteers here? But also to, like, why is this swarm of Asian well-dressed people here?...I'm not sure if that was good for the project or not.
>
> *Lindsey, interview, June 28, 2008*

Of a similar work day, John noted that it seemed that the long-term residents expressed a certain irritation with these work crews by asserting that their cars were blocking the street and so on. What was visible to the long-term residents was that a group of Asian-Americans and whites were coming onto their block for a short period – a "work weekend" or "work day" – descending on the property to work and then leaving. These brief encounters that were focused on the physical structures rather than on interpersonal relationships left a sense of intrusion: almost as though the block has been the subject of a swift attack. Perhaps compounding this sense was the lack of signage and perceived erraticness of the project. Because the Beaumont Initiative was volunteer driven and in fact, efforts were dependent on people's non-work time – essentially evenings and weekends and so progress was slow; further, since so much work was done within the units, the extent of progress was not fully visible from the outside.

These conditions set the stage for the chain of events that effectively brought the project to a standstill. In the late fall, the rear wall of two units collapsed; such a collapse would be loud and startling and it drew the attention of neighbours. As part of the city's standard response to structural collapses, the fire department arrived to inspect the scene and file a safety report. This move would mean that the department of Licenses and Inspection (L&I) would be slated to inspect the site and the buildings and the inspection would likely result in the structures being condemned. This procedure usually happens

with little notice so the Beaumont Initiative members stayed watchful of the property, aware that the physical and legal status of the structures was precarious. In Philadelphia, L&I has a reputation for being inconsistent and for a slow response time, with this in mind, when several weeks passed and L&I had not appeared, the Beaumont Initiative members relaxed, relieved that they had avoided what would likely have been a difficult situation. In the meantime, a long-term block resident with connections to an influential city councilwoman drew upon her network to lodge a complaint about the structures through the councilwoman's office. This well placed grievance resulted in quick action: an L&I representative observed the site and issued an immediate condemnation notice. Once a notice has been issued, it is posted visibly on the structure and the city is required to notify the property owner that they have 5 business days within which to contest the notice. In this case, the condemnation notice was issued on a Friday; a block resident who was a member of the Beaumont Initiative alerted other members to the notice and members of the Initiative immediately attempted to contact L&I to explain that the houses were in the process of a rehab and the structural issues would be resolved shortly. Members reported that regardless of when and who called, the telephone number on the L&I notice simply rang without being answered; other methods of contacting L&I also proved unsuccessful. On the Tuesday following the condemnation notice – that is, on the second business day after the notice was issued – the Beaumont Initiative, as the owner of the properties received by mail, an official letter instructing them that they had five business days to take action. However, at the same time, a city contractor had begun demolition. From Friday to Tuesday, the Beaumont Initiative units had gone from being condemned to partially demolished. Beaumont Initiative members described this experience as "painful" and "heartbreaking" and were visibly saddened and deflated when talking about these events. John noted that,

> even with this neighbour who went crazy – and she and I have talked since – and now she's furious with other people on the block. That they didn't tell her that the Beaumont Initiative was working on these houses, because her house is in much worse shape now than it was before.
>
> *John, interview, May 29, 2008*

The process that ended in the loss of these houses reveals gaps in communication, in definitions of community and certainly in city processes.

Walking down Beaumont Ave in the late summer of 2008, more than 6 months after the demolition of the Beaumont Initiative houses, and 4 years after the Cedar Mennonite congregants had identified the street as a potential site for the affordable housing experiment, the character of the block was becoming more mixed. More units were being rehabbed, by recent buyers, some of whom were now living in their houses during the renovation process; a large empty space, overgrown with weeds marked the area

where the Beaumont Initiative units had been; and the long-term residents of the street continued to maintain their own houses, but also maintain a distance from their new neighbours. One long-term resident, an elderly African-American widower, locked himself in his house, playing operatic music at high volumes during the day and at odd hours at night. He refused to answer the door and observing my attempts to speak with him, other long-term residents noted that he rarely emerged from the house and certainly would not engage with strangers. These other residents, a group of African-American women, whom ranged in age from mid-30s to early 80s, as they informed me, observed the street from their front porch. Their stance was one of determined observation, with all that the word implies: they watched, but refused to engage unless it suited them. Of course, having observed my frequent presence on the street, my interactions with other residents and the fact I often took pictures, these residents recognized me, but did not extend themselves to offer even a greeting. I waited to approach them, in part to gauge their degree of engagement with a familiar stranger – as this was certainly the position from which the members of Cedar Mennonite began. Since no one from this group approached me, verbally or otherwise, I eventually initiated interaction.

The women asked me repeatedly if I was from the city; they assumed I was from the department of Licenses and Inspection and although I explained my interest and

**Figure 5.3.** The units purchased by the Beaumont Initiative. Source: Google Maps, accessed June 8, 2008.

my position, it was difficult to dissuade them from associating me with the city. As we discussed the street and the neighbourhood, it became apparent that they assumed that the Beaumont Initiative members were city workers. It was not clear if this had always been their assumption or if this was a newer development following the demolition of the units. Regardless, these residents seemed uninterested in differentiating between the work of the Beaumont Initiative and the city, persistently referring to them as one and the same. Illustrating this slippage, one woman asked, "Why are they bothering with those houses when my sidewalk is all tore up?" (Iris, interview, June 7, 2008) and treating me as a city worker, insisted that I take photographs of the sidewalk and file them with the city. The street infrastructure that the city should have maintained, such as the sidewalk, drains, lights, trees on the sidewalks and the road itself, was clearly neglected and these items were of far greater concern to this group of long-term residents than the state of other houses on the street. This tendency to not make distinctions extended too to how they viewed their newer neighbours. These newer neighbours were younger, white and often had young children and although they watched them in their renovation work, the longer-term residents were not acquainted with these neighbours and tended to describe them as a unified group. Focussed on their renovation projects and their own houses, neither did the newer neighbours attempt to make connections with the longer-term residents.



## 5.5. INADVERTENTLY ALTERING THE NEIGHBOURHOOD

While Cedar Mennonite was explicitly concerned with processes of gentrification and wanted to formally act against them, slightly to their north, a Muslim mosque was a significant implicit actor in neighbourhood change. The Association of Islamic Charitable Projects (AICP) is located where University City's gentrification begins to meet the worn heart of West Philadelphia at 45th Street; this area is similar to Cedar Mennonite's in that it is at the edge of the gentrification zone around the University of Pennsylvania, although the AICP is located on the last block of this zone and the frayed neighbourhood is visible from its doorstep. It is a mosque that asserts itself as "The Resounding Voice of Moderation" within Islam and urges its members to focus on self development and assistance to the needy (Association of Islamic Charitable Projects web site). Established in the early 1990s, it began with meetings in members' houses and shortly after, the group purchased a former Baptist church building, establishing a worship space (*musalla*), administrative offices, community space and eventually, a school. When it was purchased, the building needed major repairs: its roof was damaged, doors and windows were often missing and the remainder were non-functional, and the walls were damaged. The structure itself was sound, but needed a great deal of repair in order to be usable. The building was situated among those in similar disrepair that had been abandoned by their owners; the resulting blight accommodated drug dealing, squatters and petty and violent crime.

The AICP bought the building because it was inexpensive – its deteriorated condition and the volatile activities of the surrounding blocks made for a low price – and because it was large enough to accommodate their plans for their community's future. Their focus was on the building itself; their emphasis was on making the structure usable, while paying little attention to the environs. The theological imperatives of Islam, however, positioned the mosque to create an inadvertent impact on their surroundings. Because Muslims pray five times a day every day, the mosque was in frequent use and since prayer periods are relatively brief (20 minutes or less), people entered and left the mosque regularly. Frequent entering and exiting meant that those who used the mosque could become caught in the neighbourhood's violent activity and so male members informally patrolled the area outside the mosque as a safety measure, providing informal protection to users of the mosque. Patrols consisted of being consistently and visibly present as well as constantly calling to the police to report illegal activity.

This "eyes on the street" approach provided a degree of deterrence and the mosque activity was noticed by a local secular neighbourhood association who invited the mosque to join their efforts. While mosque members were reluctant to extend into a non-religious sphere, they were eager to improve their block to ensure a safe environment for the children attending their Islamic school and to that end were willing to join forces with a secular group. These efforts soon meshed with University City efforts to increase property values by targeting crime and blight and housing prices in the immediate area of this mosque have increased, while illegal activity has decreased. It is clear that despite their reluctance to extend beyond a religious community – that is, to see themselves as part of a non-Muslim community – the mosque was a key agent in altering the character of the streets around it. The format of their worship – frequent prayer – and their ultimate goal of creating an Islamic-based school for their children differentiate them from secular efforts by introducing a temporal element. Their constant presence and the urgency they felt for a school for their children limited the time periods during which illegal activity could take place, driving illegal activity into other areas where they could control not only space, but time.

The AICP continued to make their presence known in the public spaces around the mosque. On Fridays, the Muslim week's holy day, the first afternoon prayer is the most important prayer of the week and so many AICP members make an extra effort to attend the mosque for Friday prayers. The first sign of the importance of this event is the abundance of cars parked around the AICP building; not only are all legal parking spots taken, but members begin to park their cars in one of the driving lanes of a side street adjacent to the mosque. The cars are double-parked in two neat rows, but in effect they turn a two-way street into a one-way street. This blockage drew little attention when the AICP's neighbours were primarily drug dealers and others participating in illegal activities, however, as the mosque's own efforts to increase the area's safety pushed out these illicit residents, neighbouring housing values began to increase and a first wave of gentrifiers

purchased properties adjacent to the mosque. These newer residents objected to the double-parking, seeing it as obstructing their right of way in the neighbourhood and called the police to complain. The AICP members who had been instrumental in clearing the block of illegal activity were now being viewed as promoting illegal activity, even if they were responsible only for parking violations rather than violent crimes. Despite this resistance to its public presence, members also set up tables and sell Islamic-oriented goods and food outside the mosque after Friday prayers. During this time, the mosque space expands to the sidewalk, spilling onto the road. Since on one side of the mosque is Walnut St., a main road through West Philadelphia, ordinarily this area is one with little foot traffic and has the feel of a neighbourhood through which people drive, rather than stop. On Friday, the vendors' tables and people milling around the mosque transform the block and the space seems lived in at a human scale, rather than merely driven through. The AICP brings this sense of occupation rather than abandonment when it uses these same spaces for its celebrations, in particular, the mosque closes off the side street for a block during its celebration of the Prophet Mohammed's birthday (Figure 5.4). The mosque applies for a city permit to close off the street, using the space for vendors'

**Figure 5.4.** The street beside the mosque, closed off with chairs and banners (left) for the celebration of the Prophet Mohammed's birthday. The mosque is on the right of this picture. Source: Author's photograph.

tables, children's games and food. Since the AICP building is on Walnut St., the closure is a highly visible symbol of the mosque's presence and insistence that it has a right to neighbourhood space.

## 5.6. "A MODEL FOR THE NEIGHBOURHOOD"

In the Northeast neighbourhoods of Philadelphia, another Mennonite church was attempting to connect with its neighbourhood. Roosevelt Mennonite is located in the Northeast area of Philadelphia, an area that is primarily residential and until 10 years ago, its residents were typically white, working-class and of Irish Catholic extraction; its newer residents are African-Americans, Latinos and immigrants from Russia and Eastern Europe. In the late 1940s when Roosevelt church was established in Northeast Philadelphia, the area was not considered a part of the city, it was viewed instead as a streetcar suburb. The church was initially comprised of less than 10 members, traditional ethnic Mennonites, who – using the language of the church, felt "called to plant" a church near the godless city[4]. For most of its existence, church members were noticeably different from their neighbours due to their plain dress[5], traditional beards[6] and clearly rural connections. The urban Catholic residents of the Northeast ascribed the Mennonites' unusual appearance and habits to their origins as farmers and largely regarded Roosevelt Mennonite as an outpost of rural farming life. As the Irish Catholic residents of the Northeast moved to the suburbs and aged, and were replaced primarily by non-white ethnic groups – African-Americans, Latinos and Southeast Asians – Roosevelt Mennonite began to stand out for an additional difference: although there were fewer members in plain dress and traditional beards, most members continued to be ethnic Mennonites, so that the church was a largely white institution in an increasingly multicultural neighbourhood. This much starker contrast between the members of the church and their neighbourhood caused the church to re-examine its purpose and goals.

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[4] "Church planting" is the process of establishing a new church. Mennonites used the theological language of being "called" to engage in this process: through spiritual discernment (usually prayer), a congregation or individuals would decide that God is calling them to begin a new a church in a particular area. These calls are typically supported by pre-existing contact with or knowledge of the church planting area.

[5] Mennonite "plain clothes" are similar to those of the Amish in that the clothes are very simple with little adornment; typical outfits may consist of light-coloured shirts and dark trousers (for men) and light-coloured blouses and dark pinafores (for women), who would often also wear simple bonnets or similar head coverings. This traditional manner of dress is not usually seen among contemporary urban Mennonites.

[6] These beards were distinctive because the facial hair was confined to the jaw line, while the area above the upper lip was clean shaven; for traditional Mennonites, typically most adult men would grow beards in this manner.

This process of reflection led them to decide that they wanted to make a concerted effort to mirror their neighbourhood and engage with it. The church saw a role for itself as a conciliator between the neighbourhood's contrasting residents, recent and long-term. To achieve this new goal, the church changed the face of its leadership and set upon a series of steps that would allow for greater neighbourhood engagement. The former, was a literal change of face. An ethnic Mennonite pastor, white and traditionally bearded, retired and was replaced by a young African-American man. The change was noticed immediately: an African-American woman who eventually became a church member commented,

> At first, I didn't know who these Mennonites were…I thought they were white people from farms. And so, I thought, that's a white church. But then I saw Pastor Stone, and I thought, 'Oh, black people go there too.'
>
> *Mabel, interview, September 19, 2008*

The church leadership did not set out to deliberately fulfil a checklist to ensure a more diverse leadership, but in making the decision to align more closely with the neighbourhood, they also avoided replicating the previous tradition of white and male leadership. One member of the church leadership team noted,

> So, you know, we wanted to have both male and female – we wanted to have, you know, different races represented, like, in our leadership…I mean, another kind of thing that we didn't plan but, you know, it's definitely beneficial to that process, is our senior pastor is part of a mixed race [family]…so, you know, it kind of helped build some of that – to become kind of a multiracial congregation. When that's clearly welcome, in the leadership and, you know, they feel that – people feel that they're represented, you know?
>
> *Cathy, interview, June 11, 2008*

> We do it because we feel like that's what it should be in the kingdom of God. And also, because that's what our neighbourhood is. Our neighbourhood is mixed. And for us, to be able to be a model on how people of different ethnicities and backgrounds can come together, you know, it's a model for the community to follow. That's one… That's another thing that we see. Because we're not just mixed ethnically, we're mixed socio-economically. And we would like to be more mixed, age-wise.
>
> *Judy, interview, August 26, 2008*

This shift underscored the ethnic openness of the congregation in particular and the new pastor brought with him a more extroverted style in the tradition of African-American church culture, in contrast with the restrained and inward focus of traditional white Mennonite pastors. Intentionally attempting to establish visibility and everyday familiarity with neighbourhood residents, Pastor Stone would spend time outside the church building,

so that residents could see him speaking with a range of people and begin to think of the church as an active space. This focus was on visibility outside the church, but within close proximity and was deployed at key temporal moments: when people were leaving for work in the morning or returning from work, in the afternoons; this allowed Pastor Stone to greet them as well as maximize everyday familiarity. In addition, Pastor Stone would walk around the neighbourhood, knocking on doors to introduce himself to neighbourhood residents. These tactics in public familiarity meant that residents recognised him and began to associate a strong neighbourhood presence with Roosevelt Mennonite.

The church also embarked on a series of programmatic efforts to embed themselves as a neighbourhood institution. First, they commissioned a demographic report on the neighbourhood to discover who lived in the neighbourhood and analyse resulting patterns of age, origin and so on. This report was followed by a door-to-door survey of neighbourhood residents, asking people about the problems and issues the community faced. This meant that the church had to first define the physical boundaries of their neighbourhood and second, make a conscious choice of how to best make use of their resources. Like Cedar Mennonite, they used walkability as a primary tool in defining physical boundaries and determined that the area within a ten block radius comprised the church's neighbourhood. In choosing to deploy their limited resources in order to talk to residents within this area, the church leadership used this contact to invite residents to attend the church, but they emphasised that their purpose was not to proselytize but find out what the neighbourhood wanted and needed, because their connection to the neighbourhood was spiritually driven:

> I think because we just felt that, clearly, that this is where God wants us to be. And there's the God aspect of it that, you know, He really has given us a vision and a desire for this neighbourhood. And we have an understanding and wonder and not try to preach on it – that the church is not this building, the church exists for the people that are around, in the neighbourhood, because that's where God's heart is.
>
> *Judy, interview, August 26, 2008*

They found that because of the recent residential succession where Irish Catholics were leaving or aging out and being replaced by a heterogeneous group of new residents, residents often did not know each other and this lack of recognition and familiarity contributed to a sense of the neighbourhood as potentially dangerous and unstable. This disconnection in public familiarity also reduced traditional forms of social control that kept adolescent public aggression in check. The neighbourhood had previously had the luxury of a degree of automatic social cohesion that came with ethnic, class and religious homogeneity; the older Irish Catholic residents were of a similar age cohort, buying houses and raising families within the same era. The newer residents originated from a range of ethnic and religious groups and so while in the past, residents had been able to rely on

shared, usually Catholic derived institutions to maintain social cohesion, the neighbourhood now lacked institutions and structures that promoted social connectedness.

In response to this sense of social fragmentation, Roosevelt Mennonite's belief in their calling as a model for the community propelled them to think in terms of creating spaces that would promote interactions between neighbourhood residents. The focus of this effort was to be an annual community festival created and fully funded by the church. The festival, held at the end of the summer, used the outdoor grounds of the local recreation centre, one of the rare public spaces in that Northeast neighbourhood. It was advertised with precision, by church members hand-delivering flyers to every residence within a 10 block radius of the church, with a special focus on the local public housing development. The event was funded by the church and staffed by congregants; activities were child-focused and food and entertainment were free. At the festival, the church name is displayed prominently on several banners and when one enters the festival site, church members in distinctive t-shirts approach and briefly introduce the church and its mission, issuing an invitation to attend a service at the church. The exchange is certainly intended to encourage festival goers to attend a worship service at the church, but it is a proselytizing encounter of the mildest kind.



The festival has the feel of a small fair or carnival, with many games for children, a small petting zoo, fair food staples such as hot dogs and candy floss and a pop band playing Christian music; all available at no cost. Combined with these child-oriented activities the church sets up a tent under which they invite various agencies to maintain information tables. The agencies include household utility companies (gas, electric and water), social service and community health agencies. At each table, residents have the opportunity to talk to staff about assistance programs and to better understand the resources available to them. Early in the day, this tent is crowded as the adult attendees are drawn to a raffle where bags of groceries and school supplies for children are given away; this is by far the most popular event of the day. After the raffle, the crowd disperses to the children's games and food areas, while many leave the site having won groceries or supplies. The tent, with its resources offering assistance to neighbourhood residents, is sparsely populated for the rest of the day. As might be expected, the attendees gather purposefully around specific activities, focussing their attention on their children's games or on the musical performances; however, they rarely interact with each other. Church members and church volunteers are recognizable by their green t-shirts, emblazoned with the church name; they are also recognizable because they attempt to interact with each other and with the non-church affiliated attendees. In speaking with non-church affiliated attendees, many of whom lived in the nearby public housing project and otherwise received state subsidies, there was a sense of uncertainty around the festival. This uncertainty was reflected in a certain furtiveness; as I waited in line for a hot dog, for example, I attempted to strike up a casual conversation with a woman next to me, avoiding eye contact, she grabbed several hot dogs and abruptly turned away. Several similar encounters and conversations

with church volunteers suggested that residents struggled to understand that the festival with its free food and activities came without requiring anything in exchange. Perhaps in particular for residents who received government assistance, a transaction that did not require their compliance nor required commercial exchange was difficult to comprehend in a society where transactions typically require payment of some kind.

## 5.7. SUMMARY

In this chapter, I have presented the activities of several faith-based organisations in Philadelphia; many of their intentions were similar to the organisations seen in the previous chapter on Rotterdam, despite the difference in national contexts. Yet, although it might be expected that the more religious U.S. culture would facilitate faith-based organisations unambiguously, these organisations found impacting non-religious residents to be difficult, perhaps even more so than the faith-based organisations in Rotterdam. This was despite formal and deliberate efforts to extend their impact beyond believers: the Beaumont Initiative and Cedar Mennonite's anti-gentrification effort illustrated attempts to formally defend the neighbourhood's existing identity and to shape its future. Both the AICP and Roosevelt Mennonite altered the neighbourhood through processes designed to increase public familiarity, neighbourliness and a sense of cohesion.

In the next chapter, I reflect on the contrasts and unexpected similarities between faith-based institutions in these two cities and consider how we can begin to make sense of the meaning and value of faith-based organisations.

# 6 ADAPTING TO NEOLIBERALISM, (RE)PLACING FAITH

The preceding two chapters have provided a view into the activities of selected faith-based organisations in Rotterdam and Philadelphia. This exploration was guided by the following research questions: what do these faith-based organisations do? How do they interact with the populations they serve? What role do they play in their neighbourhoods and city context? Underpinning these questions was the larger question: why do faith-based organisations exist in contexts that are characterised as secular and modern when both secularity and modernity are often posited as inhospitable, if not antagonistic, to religion? In this chapter the findings in Chapters 4 and 5 are reflected upon in light of these questions, to widen our understanding of the meaning and significance of these actors and their actions. This will assist in developing a greater understanding of why religiously-driven actors persist and to understand the implications of their activities and existence.

## 6.1. NEOLIBERALISM AND SECULARISM

Faith-based organisations are not a new phenomenon, yet what makes them of note in the contemporary context? In fact, many of the organisations in this study have existed since the 1970s and 1980s and in Europe and North America, organisations such as the Salvation Army (Leger des Heils) with its distinctive symbology of a red shield, have been a recognizable presence since the 19th century. In light of this, one must ask, why these organisations? Why now? To understand the relevance of contemporary faith-based organisations, they must be viewed in the context of larger processes of secularism and neoliberalism. If we acknowledge time and space as equal constructors of social processes

as suggested by Massey (1991, 1992, 1994) then one might argue in the linear sense of time progressing, the role of faith-based organisations must have altered over the decades in which they have existed. However, adding a more nuanced view of the progression of time, taking into account the change of the role of religion as well as the shifting understanding of who is responsible for people who are socially marginalised, we might arrive at conclusions that must account for the unfolding of neoliberalization over the last two decades as well as the shifts in the role of religion. As organisations which are religious and also providers in the economy of social care, the role and meaning of faith-based organisations then *must* have changed over time. Returning to the element of faith, let us start by looking at the role of religion in light of the processes of secularisation.

The earlier review of secularism, in Chapter 2, noted that secularism can be defined as the withdrawal of religion from the public sphere, its decreasing importance in that sphere and a subsequent privatization of religion. Recalling too, that Casanova complicated this view by suggesting that religion had in fact become *deprivatized* in a new expression of secularism (Casanova, 1994), we might note that the interaction between religion and unfolding secularisation has resulted in changes to the place of religion in public life, but it has also altered how religions and religious communities conceptualise *themselves* and their (public) roles. Neoliberalism adds a further layer in terms of religion's outward-facing – that is, public – place, while secularism has impacted religious communities' internal make-up. The most obvious of these internal repercussions is, of course, the commonly referenced decline in church attendance (Finke & Stark, 1998); however, in addition to these individual-level changes, it becomes clear that even within faith-based organisations where individuals firmly embedded themselves in a religious context, changes wrought by secularism have made the meaning of religion uncertain.

In her decadal review of the geography of religion, Kong notes that as geographers have recognized the broad reach of religion – from spaces of worship to everyday ritualized behaviours – defining what is religion has become a slippery process (Kong, 2010). Ambiguity about the boundaries of the religious permeates not only scholarly thinking, but also that of those engaged *within* faith-based endeavours. For those within faith-based organisations, there is uncertainty about how to define religion in general terms as well as how to define religion *within their organisations*. This hesitation bears underlining as it is a result of secularism's redefinition of religion's boundaries. Unsure of the role of religion beyond spaces of worship, these smaller organisations grasp at the gaps opened by neoliberalism, finding a niche that permits relative freedom to define themselves. If we return to the initial terms of an actually existing neoliberalism and an actually existing secularism, discussed in Chapter 2, one might suggest that religiously-driven organisations are being found newly useful under neoliberalism. The double-sidedness of neoliberalization – withdrawal and intervention (Brenner & Theodore, 2002) – can be seen in the withdrawal of services to those without appropriate identity papers and the extension of this withdrawal to agencies whether or not they receive city funds. The withdrawal too acts as a pull force, drawing

faith-based organisations into a key role for the city: that of providing shelter for those who the city has decided should not access services; and the veil of secularism allows for the city officials to turn a blind eye to these contraventions of law. In Rotterdam, the second aspect of these informal partnerships between the city and faith-based organisations is the use of the organisations to monitor social and demographic changes in hidden populations – a sort of privatization of a previously public, city function. In the last illustration in the previous chapter, of the Islamic organisation, we can see strains of the neocommunitarianism that often accompanies neoliberalism: where the city (and sometimes the national government) attempts to strengthen "appropriate" Islam by providing De Tafel direct access to policy making. However, the relationship between state and community is not one way; while Muslims gain an influential role, the city's effort to designate and bolster an "appropriate" Islam is also one that creates a homogenizing force within the city's Muslim communities, so that all groups might be reduced to "Islamic" rather than Turkish or Moroccan, and so on.



In Philadelphia, another thread of neocommunitarianism can be seen in the organisations' attempts to engage with re-defining community by emphasising its spatial and cross-ethnic elements. In reifying community over the individual, faith-based organisations in Philadelphia served neoliberalism's withdrawal of state services while suggesting that individuals *qua* community were the appropriate replacement for services such as youth recreation, health and utilities assistance and so on, that might normatively be provided by the state. However, despite a willingness to act as neoliberal agents in service of a "shadow state" (Wolch, 1999), the Philadelphia organisations insisted on carrying out their neoliberal duties with a distinctly theological, non-market emphasis[1] on long-term commitments of care that were too difficult to measure in neoliberalism's requisite market terms. Given this, it would seem that not only does neoliberalism open up spaces for faith-based organisations to find new roles for themselves thus allowing for internal re-definition, but in offering themselves as conduits for neoliberal processes, they also alter and re-shape neoliberalism itself. Not only do faith-based organisations provide a site for the convergence of neoliberalism and secularism, but in fact they are a site upon which neoliberalism and secularism become mutually constitutive.

While the urge to view secularism and neoliberalism as cleanly intersecting, these faith-based organisations suggest that neoliberalism and secularism intersect like a helix rather than perpendicular phenomena. Helix-like they unfurl to twine around each other, intersecting frequently and influencing each concept's path. In other words, certainly one of the ways in which faith-based organisations could be viewed as diverging from their past is in the greater degree of blurring and contradiction that is apparent in their actions as well as their self-conception; the latter will be considered further later, in this chapter. It should be unsurprising then that the identity crisis bestowed on converging neoliberalism and secularism should offer no clear conclusion.

[1] This approach has been characterized by Cloke as a framework of "theo-ethics" (2010, 2011).

## 6.2. MAKING PLACE

Healey has argued that spatial analysis should move beyond examining housing markets, economic activity and other "hard" markers of residents' lives, noting that

> The social experience that develops in places where those in particularly difficult circumstances find themselves concentrated adds to the difficulties people already experience. Some people in such neighbourhoods in such conditions do find ways to maximise their chances of flourishing. A key variable in whether this happens or not is the social world which builds up through social interaction in the living place
>
> *(Healey, 1998, p. 69).*

Making an argument that is similar to Massey's, Healey underlines the importance of the *social experience* to create a *living* place. Recalling Massey's untangling of temporality within space, to create *dynamic* place, discussed in Chapter 2, place can be understood as an element that is continually being created. Place can be seen to be emerging from the continuous interplay of the elements of time, social structures, social interaction and space (Gieryn, 2000; Massey, 1991; Soja, 2003). As we have seen in Chapters 4 and 5, the faith-based organisations in Rotterdam and Philadelphia, seemed too to understand place in these terms, undertaking various efforts to shape place, creating a discursive relationship between the organisations and the places in which they were embedded.

While organisations in both cities took a "people *and* place" approach (Meegan & Mitchell, 2001, p. 2171, emphasis original), the scale at which place was significant varied in Rotterdam and Philadelphia, precisely because of the interplay of social processes and place. In Rotterdam, place was conceptualised as the nation-state, in large part because of the impact of national social policies and discourses. The high visibility of debates surrounding immigration and multiculturalism in the Netherlands means that where visible minorities are present – figuratively or literally – scale shifts to the national level and the nation becomes the most significant place of focus. In Massey's example of time-place driven social experience in Kilburn, for the Irish Republican Kilburn is transformed into a transnational site of revolutionary resistance; similarly, in the Netherlands, issues related to visible minorities largely eclipse local sites of neighbourhood or city. In contrast, in Philadelphia, the nation-state receded and local sites were of primary importance. This difference in scale also impacted the prominence of physical space as a component of place: in Philadelphia, the physical space of the neighbourhood in terms of the physical spatial elements of walkability, public space, appearance of the built environment and so on, repeatedly emerged as explicit and significant factors. In terms of everyday lifeworlds, the neighbourhood is the built environment on *human-scale* – to borrow a term from architecture – that is, the neighbourhood is not only imagined, but it can be touched, seen, and experienced in short space of time, the 20 minutes it may take to walk ten blocks. In a sense, the neighbourhood as a physical space does not need to be imagined, it can be

anchored in materiality, evidenced by road boundaries, commercial activity, visual elements and so on. In Philadelphia, Cedar Mennonite's attempt to build affordable housing reflects this use of physical space as the scaffolding upon which social processes are developed. The tangibility of physical objects and a relatively easily identifiable built environment offers an explanatory path for the emphases on neighbourhood in Philadelphia, while the contrasting elusiveness of the materiality of a nation-state suggests the emphasis on social processes and structures as the connective tissue to place in Rotterdam. In Rotterdam, place was no less important than in Philadelphia, but it was marked by connection to the social structures of nationality. That is, where in Philadelphia, the socio-spatial dialectic depended on a literal reading of physical space for its spatial component, in Rotterdam, place was constructed to be bounded by an imagined non-immigrant nation that produced an "authentic" Dutchness, called the Netherlands. However, despite the dominance of a vision that was tied to the national scale, a local scale was also relied upon as a conduit to the national.



Turning to reflect on the ways in which place was discursively created in Rotterdam and Philadelphia, it is useful to think about the role of multiply scaled place. Kusenbach notes that there are various place-based "nested patterns of daily practices, place attachment, social interaction and relationships" (2008, p. 230) that operate at different scales of social life. The conceptualization of these characteristics as *nested* suggests both overlap and a building block structure – that is, that layers build upon each other to create a whole structure. The Rotterdam organisations that framed their primary purpose as embedded within the neighbourhood illustrated this nesting structure by situating their place allegiance to neighbourhood within a larger conceptualisation of the national scale issues of immigration and integration. In Philadelphia, the Mennonite organisations made the assumption that the boundaries of physical space should be accompanied by "social interaction and relationships" (Kusenbach, 2008, p. 230) that would constitute place-derived community. They held a normative conception of place creation where the spatial and social were actively nested in neighbourhood place-attachment; for those in Rotterdam, their normative place was at the central state scale. The relationship between scale of activity and the scale to which the activity linked its participants is illustrated in Figure 6.1, below. In both cities, the organisations' foci of activities were at the local, specifically neighbourhood scales. As indicated in Figure 6.1, for organisations in Rotterdam, the intent was to connect participants to a city and ultimately, nation-state-based affinity, while in Philadelphia, place affinity linkages ended at the city scale without extending to macro units of region or nation-state.

This tension between local activity that on its face seems to be neighbourhood-focussed and embedded, but that serves national concerns and a national normativity, can be seen in the case of the Oude Wijken Pastoraat in Chapter 4. In its stated position, the organisation took a place-based approach bounded by its neighbourhood. Explicitly, the Oude Wijken Pastoraat rooted itself in a human services-driven theology proposed by

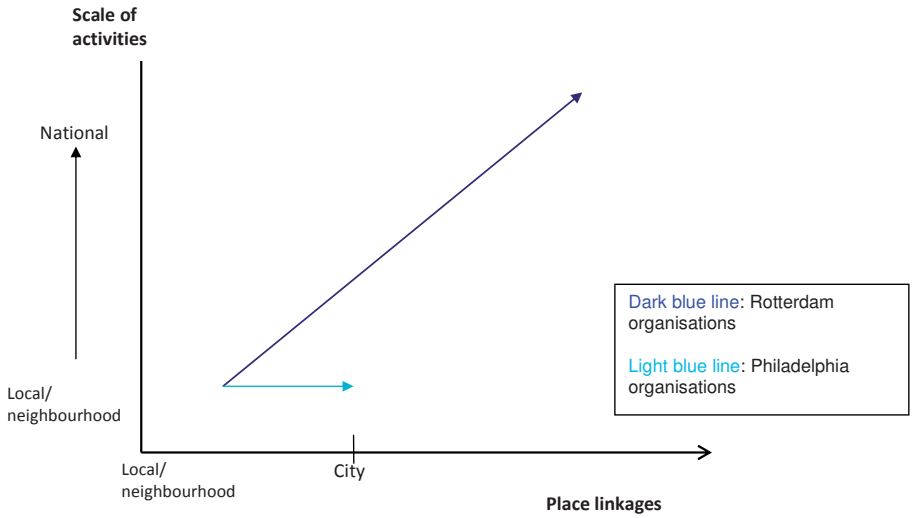


Figure 6.1. Activities and scale of effect.

Andries Baart's theory of presence (2004). Baart, a Dutch social work scholar, articulated a "methodology of care giving" that emphasises individual and community care via non-interventionist routes. He suggests that conventional systems of social work and human services are designed to identify problems and intervene to solve them; and that this approach is considered the model of professionalism and effective social work. In contrast, he identifies workers in urban ministries such as the Oude Wijken Pastoraat, as being non-interventionist, "without focusing directly on problem solving…the most important thing…[they] bring is the faithful offering of themselves: being there, making themselves available" (Baart, 2002, p. 1). Baart's approach has, unsurprisingly, largely been eschewed by secular social services – the passive, reactive element within it is hardly minor and runs contrary to technocratic, interventionist and problem-solving oriented state social services – yet it has also been only selectively adopted among faith-based organisations. In Rotterdam, the Oude Wijken Pastoraat seemed to be the only organisation that found Baart explicitly compelling. Equally, the Oude Wijken Pastoraat was the only organisation that strove to separate itself and its purpose from efforts that were outcome driven; this position, as will be seen later in this chapter, suggests the Oude Wijken Pastoraat's resistance to neoliberalism's impetus toward privatization and efficiency.

In looking to Baart, the Oude Wijken Pastoraat has been particularly drawn by his theorising of neighbourhood ministries as providing a kind of structural friendship: that is, the workers in these ministries were acting to support residents much in the manner of a very supportive friend. He highlighted the importance of this role, noting that having this structural role of neighbourhood friend is valuable because "[s]uch trustworthy and safe

figures are a rarity in the designated neighbourhoods and often come to be exceptionally valued" (Baart, 2002, p. 3). For our purposes what Baart is referring to when he discusses this lack of trusted individuals is a neighbourhood without social cohesion – not only are these neighbourhoods lacking the dispersed trust in which residents may loosely recognise and rely on each other – they also lack *local*, institutional, and dependable authority. This is the role that Baart's "presence practitioners" fulfil; the sole purpose of which is to "centre on the *recovery and maintenance of the dignity* of the most marginalized neighbourhood residents" [my emphasis] (Baart, 2002, p. 4). In this view, the dignity of residents in these neighbourhoods is compromised because these individuals lack autonomy as they have few resources and so are dependent on the state and subject to its "bureaucratic violence" (2002, p. 4). Baart underscores the need not only for access to resources – something that state and secular agencies equally agree upon – but access to resources in a particular manner. By being problem-oriented and aggressively interventionist, bureaucracies undermine individual autonomy and, it might be suggested, infantilize the recipients of aid, by removing their ability to make choices. Borrowing Baart's terms, this process of weakening autonomy, bureaucratically does violence to individual dignity and autonomy. This argument's roots lie in liberalism's notions of the sanctity of the autonomous individual and a Rawlsian notion of social justice. These conditions of autonomous dignity are necessary for a socially just society. Baart's presence theory offers a meso link between Rawlsian justice and the applied structure needed by practitioners.



Interestingly, although contemporary Oude Wijken Pastoraat workers refer to Baart's theories as framing their work, his theorising emerged from studying similar neighbourhood pastoraats in Utrecht; that is, the Oude Wijken Pastoraat was already following this path to embedding itself in Rotterdam's older neighbourhoods well before Baart offered their work a theoretical gloss. The relationship between these two elements – Baart's theory and Oude Wijken Pastoraat's practise – suggests a mutually constitutive, dialectical process between theory and practise. Although referencing Baart's presence theory, the Oude Wijken Pastoraat accounts for the genesis of their approach as emerging directly from their interpretation of the Christian Gospels. They take from the Gospels an emphasis simply being with people through their suffering in combination with the same Gospels exhortation to care for the less able and marginalized. The relationship between the theory of presence and the work of the Oude Wijken Pastoraat might be reciprocal: the theory was created from existing activities and behaviours, but is now used to reinforce and frame the Pastoraat's continuing work. But it also underscores the difficulty of theorising the informal work that is performed by Pastoraat. The Pastoraat's strength lies in its wide-ranging and undefined scope; this fluidity also confines the Pastoraat to the micro-level and to specific places. It is bound to the narrower territorial spaces of neighbourhood because such flexibility requires an intensive investment of time in the form of people who play the role of "structural friend". Since this approach is not measurable by task or outcome, it requires, as Baart notes, simply *presence* unfettered by the constraints of clear

end products. Without these clear demonstrable outcomes, the Pastoraat is unattractive investment; for state agencies who offer the largest amounts of funding, the Pastoraat does not offer a clear-cut linear product. It might be argued that under the pressure of neoliberalism's drive to efficiency, the absence of a concrete outcome that demonstrates the value of investment and shows a clear return on investment leaves the state uninterested in supporting organisations such as the Oude Wijken Pastoraat, with nebulous outcomes.

However, the neoliberal utility of the Oude Wijken Pastoraat depended not simply on the organisation and its structure, but on the group(s) which it targeted. For older working class white residents the Pastoraat's emphasis was on long-term, indeterminate presence. In contrast, for immigrants, the organisation offered a more discernible role as neoliberal agent: a position most compelling demonstrated by their monitoring of the movement of illegal immigrants in sex work. This dual role as contextually dependent shadow state actor illuminates the multiple possible roles *vis à vis* neoliberalism, undertaken by faith-based organisations.

While Baart's attention to protecting the fragile and disconnected individual and the Oude Wijken Pastoraat's harnessing of those terms suggest a benign and positive contribution, contrasting it with organisational efforts in Philadelphia suggests that its position is less straightforward. Unlike the Oude Wijken Pastoraat, the Philadelphia organisations in this study viewed passive presence as fundamentally inadequate.

In the specifics of its attention to neighbourhood, the Oude Wijken Pastoraat created an implicit dialogue with the way Rotterdam as a place has been publicly conceptualised. Due to Rotterdam's focus on immigrants and issues of integration, the city has become envisioned as a unit comprised of specific ethnic and cultural groups, assuming homogeneity *within* each ethnic and cultural group. The combination of an emphasis on the city scale and the (constructed) homogenization of ethnic and cultural groups leads to a dominance of services and attention to residents as Moroccans, Turks, Antilleans, Muslims, and so on, with native White Dutch residents similarly comprising a single group homogenized into an undifferentiated middle-class that forms a single Dutch culture with equal access to resources and equal capabilities. It is in part an absence of an acknowledgement of physical *space* that permits this reduction to a single identity-type. When the physical space of neighbourhood is acknowledged, differentiation within groups becomes apparent; and the Oude Wijken Pastoraat's neighbourhood-based watchfulness acknowledges older and primarily working class ethnic Dutch residents. These residents are noticed because of the Pastoraat's dependence on neighbourhood as a framing device for their activities. While younger and middle-class residents have largely disappeared from these neighbourhoods being replaced by immigrants, older and working class ethnic Dutch residents have remained, but have become invisible. These residents, many of whom, the Pastoraat workers noted, were illiterate or had very low levels of literacy, are often ignored in the public discourse that focuses on the most contentious topics of the day. In Chapter 4, the cases of Gerda and Rosalind illustrated the Pastoraat's subtle care of the neighbourhood's

elderly residents. The Pastoraat's weekly dinner club also draws a primarily non-immigrant and working class group of residents; each of these groups drew the Pastoraat's attention and depended on the resources offered by the Pastoraat. In a bureaucratic society, the illiterate and uneducated were no less likely to use the Pastoraat to explain documents and to seek assistance with navigating state bureaucracy. In Middelland, Oude Westen and other older city neighbourhoods in Rotterdam, in representing residents of the neighbourhood regardless of cultural affiliation, the Pastoraat asserted an understanding of place that underscored heterogeneity within the city and within cultural and ethnic groups.



Like the Oude Wijken Pastoraat, the House of Hope revealed a dialogue with spatial hierarchies: their services were designed to integrate immigrants into a national identity by using neighbourhood based practises. However, underlying this was explicit attention to the urban, the city, as a place that was structured differently and offered especially strong openings for religion to influence the secular. The organisation referred to the work of Timothy Keller, pastor of Redeemer Presbyterian Church in New York, in viewing themselves as urban missionaries. Keller is the leading evangelical voice advocating the centrality of the urban to Christianity, because "as the city goes, so goes the culture" (Keller, 2006). In other words, for Keller, city-dwellers influence a society's direction and so Christians should seek to exert a strong influence on urbanites in order to influence the larger society (Keller, 2002, 2006; Luo, 2006). City dwelling Christians should "be an alternate city within every earthly city" (Keller, 2006). While Keller's emphasis on the importance of cities to Christianity is focussed on the opportunity to influence the creative culture-makers and shapers that live in cities, the House of Hope has drawn from Keller a focus on creating a Christian counterculture within the city while largely ignoring Keller's emphasis on those who hold sway over the larger society's culture[2]. Explicit in Keller and implicit in the House of Hope's representations is that evangelical Christians are reluctant to engage in the urban arena. Keller notes that evangelical Christians are often antagonistic to the city and avoid living in cities, viewing them as secular and leaving them to the secular world (Keller, 2006). In connecting to Keller then, the House of Hope is attempting to situate its Christianity as specifically urban.

Notable in comparing the House of Hope and the Oude Wijken Pastoraat is that despite a similarly strong commitment to the urban, the House of Hope viewed the neighbourhoods in which they established outposts as fundamentally *broken* and in need of *professional* attention to restore them. Those connected with the House of Hope cited

[2] While the House of Hope draws upon Keller to emphasise the importance of the city, its relationship to Keller's work and ministries is by no means linear because the House of Hope seeks to differentiate itself from congregations, while Keller's framework is specifically *for* congregations. For example, while Keller is a strong advocate of the long-standing evangelical practise of "church planting" – that is, sending small groups of people to specific areas to create new churches – the House of Hope distances itself from this because it sees this practise as specifically congregational.

Rotterdam as a troubled city in which legal immigrants struggled with integration while refugees and those without documentation struggled to maintain a basic existence. The organisation was drawn to the Tarwewijk and other neighbourhoods specifically because of their government designation as "problem neighbourhoods"; in a stance quite different from the Oude Wijken Pastoraat, the House of Hope approached their work within a top-down strategy, driven by government priorities and by an emphasis on outcome-oriented professionalism. In their case, the importance of place was determined by the state's analysis of neighbourhood performance based on indicators such as crime, safety, economic performance and so on.

The New Life Church offered an example of how locational change could have a direct impact on an organisation's mission; interestingly, rather than underlining the centrality of space and place to the organisation, the immediacy of this reciprocity cast *place* in a secondary role. If we recall from Chapter 4, the New Life Church moved from a site near Rotterdam's Central Station to the Tarwewijk neighbourhood drawn by the affordability and availability of buildings that met their desire to establish rehabilitation residences. In response to the different social context in Tarwewijk, they started programs aimed at the neighbourhood children and attempted to persuade the city, via district leaders (*stadsmariniers*), to provide them with subsidies. In contrast to both the Oude Wijken Pastoraat and the House of Hope, these efforts at linking themselves to Tarwewijk were superficial; this was underscored by their characterisation of the city's housing renovations in the neighbourhood as futile. For them, people and place were only weakly related: as the interview with church leadership (section 4.7) indicated, they viewed changes in the built environment as meaningless without attendant changes to the people of the neighbourhood. This people versus place binary explained New Life's eagerness to move to a site that was cheaper and offered more room while their rhetoric offered a false allegiance to the neighbourhood.

These organisations related to the physical space of neighbourhood in specific ways; the Oude Wijken Pastoraat and the House of Hope, conceptualising neighbourhood as a crucial element in a social and spatial construction of place, while New Life Church illustrated a more common conception of neighbourhood as secondary to social processes. Despite these different approaches to place at the neighbourhood scale, each of the organisations referenced place as nation in the ways they sought to connect those outside the *national place* – immigrants – to the nation.

The interest in connecting to place, in making place matter, is especially unusual in contemporary religious *congregations*. In the U.S. in particular, churches have become affinity groups, centred as much around shared economic, ethnic and educational commonality as around religious belief – perhaps even more so. Recent empirical studies are not in complete agreement about whether churches are primarily commuter-oriented or neighbourhood-oriented, yet there is some basic agreement that most church members *do* commute and that the neighbourhood is not the primary focus of congregational attention (Kinney & Winter, 2006; Reese, 2004; Reese & Shields, 2000; Sinha, Hillier,

Cnaan, & McGrew, 2007; Smith, 2001). Of recent studies, McRoberts underlined the functioning of churches as voluntary associations emerging from shared demographic traits, churches are typically organisations that worshippers commute to and concomitantly churches are increasingly detached from place (2005). As Figure 6.2 illustrates, in the typical contemporary church, some church members may live in the vicinity of the church, but for the most part, church members and neighbourhood are tenuously if at all connected. The majority of congregants are likely to live at some distance from the church and this fuels the congregation's disconnectedness from place. As noted in Chapter 2, churches are increasingly competitors in a religious market and while those seeking religion act like consumers, those providing it often behave, in kind, not unlike marketers who seek to brand their product and mark it as exclusive (Finke, Guest, & Stark, 1996; Finke & Stark, 1998). The dynamic of consumption and branding emphasises exclusivity and aspiration, creating greater incentive for closed, carefully guarded and largely homogeneous congregations. As a result, adherents attend churches in which their lifestyles are reflected, almost regardless of location; the primary criteria being that the church meets their needs as consumers and that it is within driving distance. This magnetic homogeneity keeps relatively well-off suburbanites moving between suburbs to attend church. Inner-city churches reflecting inner-city depopulation are often much smaller and are drawn to neighbourhoods that offer low rents and convenient, plentiful free parking (McRoberts, 2005; Wuthnow, 1998). These churches are disconnected from the location they choose; their connection to the neighbourhood is cursory, flowing in for worship services and almost immediately, away from the neighbourhood when those services are finished (McRoberts, 2005). Churches have become affinity groups, centred as much around shared economic, ethnic and educational commonality as around religious belief.

In contrast, the Mennonite congregations here attempted to understand community *spatially*. For the two Mennonite churches, the recognition of the importance of place was tied to their history, to changes in Mennonite identity and to their theological stance. As noted in Chapter 5 in the discussion of transitions at Roosevelt Mennonite, the term "Mennonite" implies European descent – German, Swiss or Dutch descent – combined with cultural indicators such as plain dress and distinctive beards. Mennonites settled in the U.S. in tight spatial clusters drawn to viable farming land. They were persecuted in their European countries of origin in part because of their religious beliefs which held at their core, pacifism, peace-making and justice[3]. Because they were negatively targeted and

[3] These beliefs were at odds with the both Catholics and Lutherans largely because of the Mennonite orientation toward adult baptism and voluntary church membership; these stances undermined older churches' ability to depend on automatic monetary contributions and allegiances based on infant birth and hereditary membership. In addition, Catholic and Protestant denominations were not primarily pacifist nor oriented towards peace-making and as such these denominations had co-operative relationships with the state because they were not peace religions.

because their theological positions put them at odds with other Christian denominations, even in the U.S., Mennonites maintained their distinctiveness and separation from mainstream society. In doing so, proximity became an important component of Mennonite life. In order to be able to assist each other in farming, shelter-building and economic activities, families needed to live close enough for the distance between them to be easily covered by horse and wagon. Clustering in closely knit farming communities, they developed an attachment to land and to place that was reciprocal: not only did the Mennonites themselves root themselves in these farmlands, but the areas came to be more widely known as Mennonite; the reciprocal nature of these identifications are illustrated in the term "Pennsylvania Dutch" which is applied to Mennonites and the Amish in Lancaster County, Pennsylvania.

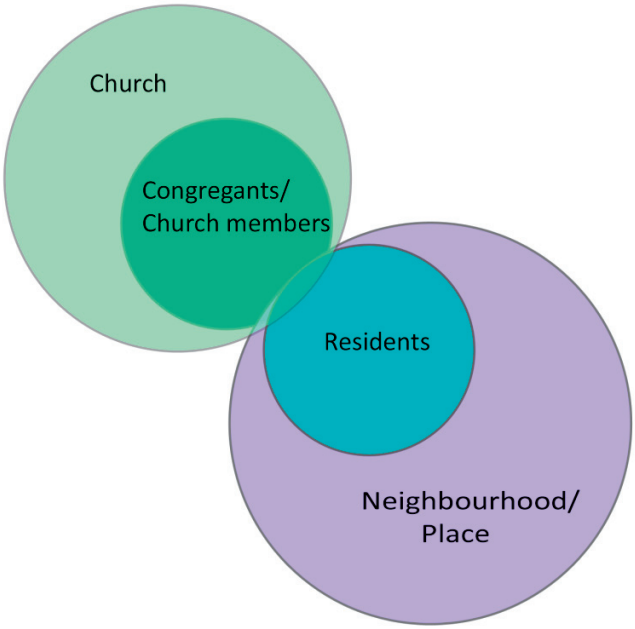


**Figure 6.2.** Typical congregational conception of linkage between community, neighbourhood and congregation.

In the U.S., Mennonite identity began moving from a *rural* identity to an urban one with the migration of many young Mennonites to cities in the 1960s and 1970s; and because of its proximity to many rural Mennonite communities, Philadelphia became a key site of rural-urban Mennonite migration. This migration was prompted by the conflict between Mennonite theology and the secular imperatives of war: Mennonites were pacifists in a state that required compulsory military service; as conscientious objectors,

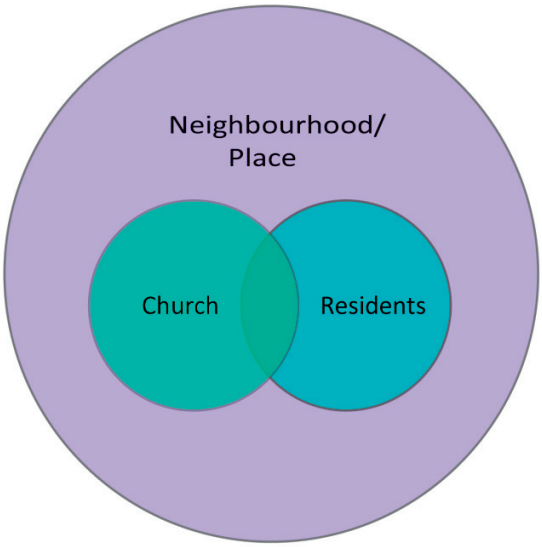




**Figure 6.3.** Mennonite conception of linkages between community, neighbourhood and congregation.

they were enrolled alternative service which often consisted of community service in urban areas. Thus, in the era of the Vietnam War and the related tightening of military service rules, Mennonites fulfilled state obligations through community service in needy urban areas. Many who came to the city remained after their service and became pioneers in creating an *urban* Mennonite identity. This process of transitioning from a rural, farming, "racially"[4] White identity to one that can accommodate the urban, as well as non-farming and non-White cultures was prompted by the Mennonites who chose to remain in the city and by the African-Americans who converted to Mennonite belief. Although this transition began over 40 years ago, the process of Mennonite urbanization and modernisation is central to why Cedar Mennonite and Roosevelt Mennonite churches have chosen to pursue engagement with their urban neighbourhoods. This can be explained partly by the slowness of the transition and by the persistent association of farming and rural life with Mennonite identity. Ethnic Mennonites are often only one generation removed from this farm-based life and its accompanying clothing and culture. Further, ethnic Mennonites

[4] I use quotation marks around terms related to "race" to acknowledge that "race" is not a biological fact, but rather a socially constructed category. See for example, A. Bonnett. (1997). Geography, "race" and whiteness: Invisible traditions and current challenges. *Area*, *29*(3), pp. 193–199; R. Delgado & J. Stefancic. (2001). *Critical race theory: an introduction*. NYU Press; I. Haney-Lopez. (2006). *White by law: the legal construction of race*. NYU Press; A. Kobayashi, & L. Peake. (2000). Racism out of place: thoughts on whiteness and an antiracist geography in the new millennium. *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*, *90*(2), pp. 392–403; M. McGuinness. (2000). Geography matters? Whiteness and contemporary geography. *Area*, *32*(2), pp. 225–230.

are still noticeable within congregations because of their distinctive German, Swiss and Dutch last names. For the Mennonites encountered in this study, the process of becoming specifically *urban* is a process too, of becoming ethnically heterogeneous and ensuring that their congregations are open to the communities around them.

These conditions have created a Mennonite approach that uniquely entwines place, theology and community. If they were typical Christian congregations (Kinney & Winter, 2006; Reese, 2004; Reese & Shields, 2000; Sinha et al., 2007; Smith, 2001), church members at Cedar Mennonite and Roosevelt Mennonite would be commuting to the church from elsewhere and each church would be only incidentally part of the neighbourhood. That is, their connections to the West Philadelphia and the Northeast would be almost accidental. Instead, the Mennonites there have deliberately decided to engage with their surroundings and be a church not simply in the neighbourhood but drawing on biblical language, *of* it too, indicating a desire to be an integral part of the neighbourhood, not simply incidental residents. This determination is reflected in Roosevelt Mennonite's commitment to literally reaching out to the neighbourhood through its community festival and attempt to make everyday contact with their neighbours.

Similarly, in launching the Beaumont Initiative, Cedar Mennonite specifically selected a *neighbourhood* problem with which to engage and their proposed solution was to renovate houses in the neighbourhood with an explicit hope that the houses would be sold to residents who were already embedded in the neighbourhood or would quickly become a part of it. The church also emphasised that its members live within walking distance of the church. This emphasis was fuelled by a desire for church members to be part of the neighbourhood – that is, to engage in a *place-based* community; but it was also driven by the same theological beliefs from which plain dress emerged, beliefs that position the church as oriented against consumerism and unnecessary use of resources.

Complicating their desire to embed themselves in the neighbourhood, members expressed concern about whether they ethnically reflected the neighbourhood around them or because they were White, they lead the way for White driven gentrification. Their deliberate choice to become a part of the neighbourhood in this way also reflects the Anabaptist theological imperative of accountability.

In these ways, Mennonites differ from many other Christian denominations because the role of place is central to their definition of community and therefore, congregation. The Mennonite idea of community is rooted in a rural struggle for survival; as farmers, Mennonites created a culture of assisting each other through the vagaries of rural life – but implicit in this was the factor of proximity: one helped one's neighbours because they were close by and proximity made farmers interdependent. Urbanising Mennonites took with them the spatial definition of community. In practise, for Roosevelt Mennonite, this meant that a church that was historically ethnically Mennonite – meaning comprised of white farmers and rurally rooted people – was faced with a range of ethnicities many of which were specifically urban-oriented.

Thus organisations in Philadelphia and Rotterdam sought in different ways to facilitate, create and participate in the construction of living places (Healey, 1998; Massey, 1991). The complexity of linking residents to place was illustrated by the nested (Kusenbach, 2008), building block approach taken by the Rotterdam organisations as they attempted to use local ties to link residents to a national normativity. In contrast, in Philadelphia, place attachments were read more narrowly, in large part because even local place attachments were tenuous, fragmented or non-existent; the distance to a national affinity was much greater and instead neighbourhood and city affinities were the most viable.



### *6.2.1. Reaching immigrants versus creating a multi-ethnic community*

The faith-based organisations in Rotterdam were distinctive in their emphasis on immigrants. As illustrated by Hanny in Chapter 4, it was a commonly held view that immigrant churches are growing, while indigenous Dutch churches are declining. This view was derived in part from surprise that Christianity was common among non-European immigrants; surprise at the prevalence of Christian adherents in "non-Western" countries was expressed by religionists as well as non-religious respondents. Although immigrants do constitute a significant part of Rotterdam's religious landscape, comprising 40% of the city's churches, this figure means that more than half, *60%* of Rotterdam's churches are in fact comprised of the indigenous Dutch (Castillo Guerra, Glashouwer, & Kregting, 2008). For non-Christians, because both the immigrant and the religion were seen as foreign to the Netherlands, religion was seen to automatically indicate immigrant status; this both constrained groups – repeatedly situating them as outside of the Dutch mainstream – and created opportunities for them as sought after representatives.

The professed focus on immigrants and in the case of some of the organisations, the highlighting of the neighbourhood would lead one to assume that immigrants played a key role in the institutions as would the neighbourhood in the lives of the workers. However, in the two organisations that most emphasised neighbourhood embeddedness and long-term neighbourhood relationships, the Oude Wijken Pastoraat and the House of Hope, workers and volunteers did not live in the neighbourhoods they served. The exceptions were the immigrant volunteers within each organisation. The immigrant volunteers were both, neighbourhood residents and part of the immigrant groups served by the organisation. For the most part, this meant that the paid workers and organisational leadership were non-immigrant ethnic Dutch, while the unpaid volunteers were immigrants. Although this could be explained by the prevalence of activities that were geared towards helping immigrant outsiders navigate Dutch society, state and culture which would require fluent knowledge of those structures. However, second- or later generation immigrants would also be well positioned to provide this kind of assistance and it was striking that immigrant input was not sought at the level of leadership and management neither were second- or third-generation immigrants part of the professional paid organisational workforce.

Where immigrants were in leadership positions, while the organisational activities and services were not substantially different, immigrants as well as their relationship to mainstream Dutch social structures and the state, were viewed differently. Organisations led by the ethnic Dutch spoke in terms of how immigrants needed to learn to navigate Dutch institutions; this was rarely a prescriptive statement, rather one of fact, meaning that in order to access resources immigrants required translation – for language and bureaucracies. They also emphasised that immigrants needed to help themselves; this was exemplified by the statement made by Anke, in Chapter 4, that she would not attempt to learn an additional language in order to communicate with her immigrant clients, because they should show their commitment to assisting themselves by learning Dutch or English in order to communicate with her. There are two assumptions in this statement: the first is that the immigrant who approaches her for help is able to access language resources with the same ease as Anke; and second, that the immigrant does not make a sufficient contribution to his or her own progress. This view echoes the idea of reciprocity which has often been discussed in terms of poverty and welfare where recipients of welfare benefits are expected to work or otherwise make a labour payment in exchange for their benefits (Arneson, 1997; White, 2003). It stands in contrast to the Rawlsian idea of distributive justice that does not make determinations on the basis of deserving or undeserving behaviour (or attributes) (Rawls, 1971); this is notable because it is from distributive justice that social justice emerges, and these organisations are also viewed as agents of social justice. The tension illuminated here then, is one between the everyday actions that evince frames of reciprocity within a larger philosophy of social justice.

Of the immigrant-led groups in Rotterdam, De Tafel, the Muslim group showed the most awareness of the constraints and opportunities provided by its positioning as a representative of Muslim immigrants. In the contemporary period, Islam has received intense global attention as well as heightened national attention within the Netherlands (Modood, 2008; Phalet, Baysu, & Verkuyten, 2010; Sniderman & Hagendoorn, 2009; Vink, 2007). In casting Muslims as a culture counter to mainstream Dutch culture and society the Dutch state at the national and local levels has sought to make connections with Muslims in order to assimilate them into mainstream Dutch society. Since as a religion, Islam functions in a highly localised manner, without central religious authority and it is a religion practised in many cultural and ethnic contexts, there is no single Islamic authority that the state can appeal to in its efforts to incorporate Muslim residents. In Rotterdam, De Tafel has stepped into this void, casting itself as a unified voice for Rotterdam's various Muslim populations. To a large extent it accepts the premise that Muslims have a singular "presumptive cultural identity" (Calhoun, 2005, p. ix) and asserts itself as the link between what happens at the micro-levels of mosque-based communities and larger Dutch society. In doing so, it views itself as a conduit for making known and visible, the Muslim voices of Rotterdam. The use of religion to characterise a population that is ethnically and culturally diverse is striking – in reality, Rotterdam's Muslims originate

from Turkey, Morocco, Pakistan and several other countries – yet they are seen to have a relatively unified set of interests both by the municipality of Rotterdam and by De Tafel's leaders and stakeholders. De Tafel's eagerness to occupy this role and the municipality's eagerness to connect with a Muslim representative has positioned De Tafel to act as a government consultant. The organisation is regularly invited to provide training for city staff; the aim of which is to increase the municipality's cultural awareness of Rotterdam's Islamic community and to help staff understand how to interact more effectively with the city's Islamic population. As the putative representative of all Muslims in Rotterdam, the city with the largest Muslim population in the Netherlands, De Tafel has also been offered opportunities to influence national policy. They have been key consultants in national immigration policies designed to prevent forced marriages and have shaped the religious studies curricula in elementary schools.



At first glance, the faith-based organisations in Rotterdam and Philadelphia look remarkably similar. In both cases the organisations were small and run by women and men who were motivated primarily by religious sentiment, often for residents who were not of the same denomination, theological strain or who even held religious beliefs. The faith-based organisations in both cities engaged in a wide range of activities so it might be useful to start by comparing organisations of a specific type against each other; for example, we might compare a congregation in Rotterdam to a congregation in Philadelphia. In Table 6.1, below, the organisations are grouped by type and city site. A notable difference that is immediately apparent between the two city sites is the absence of an organisation in Philadelphia that is primarily concerned with community service. This gap is a consequence of the nature of the faith-based human service provision sector in Philadelphia; when faith-based organisations are primarily oriented to community service, they lie within the formal social services sector in which they act as government contractors, receiving state funds to dispense specific social services. These organisations such as the Salvation Army are national organisations with local branches whose structure is determined centrally and which provide receive fees for service from

Table 6.1

| | Congregation | Umbrella group/coalition | Community service |
|---|---|---|---|
| Rotterdam | Crossroads<br>New Life<br>Scots International | De Tafel<br>KSA | Dharma<br>House of Hope<br>Missionaries of Charity<br>Oude Wijken Pastoraat |
| Philadelphia | Association of Islamic Charitable Projects<br>Cedar Mennonite<br>Roosevelt Mennonite | | |

government in addition to other funding sources. Small scale, highly local *faith*-based organisations that engage with residents *broadly*, such as Oude Wijken Pastoraat and the House of Hope in Rotterdam, were absent in Philadelphia. Where faith-based community service organisations are active on a smaller scale in Philadelphia, their focus is on a particular issue or service, such as housing for the homeless, or addiction rehabilitation; organisations operate to provide a *single* service. Further, the services provided by the community service organisations in Rotterdam were often informal: including weekly coffee hours where residents could meet and informally get to know each other; assistance navigating forms and state agencies; home visits and so on.

In contrast to Rotterdam where community service organisations were focussed on broader community impact, in Philadelphia, congregations were most likely to favour this approach. For example, in Rotterdam, the House of Hope hosted a community festival in its Tarwewijk neighbourhood, while in Philadelphia, it was the Roosevelt Mennonite congregation who created a similar event in its Northeast neighbourhood. For the Philadelphia Mennonite congregations, the informal connections that they created with neighbourhood residents was seen as an extension of traditional pastoral work; this was facilitated by their theological and historical engagements with the idea of community, as discussed previously. In Rotterdam, these same activities were linked more loosely to theological imperatives; Rotterdam informants referred to a general sense of care for the less fortunate. As noted in Chapter 4, these weaker links to theological drivers was expressed by Rotterdam informants' ambivalence towards the relationship between religion and the work they engaged in. This ambivalence was absent in Philadelphia. While informants within the same *organisational* type similarly emphasised the importance of religion, informants engaged in the same types of *activities* were more religiously-oriented in Philadelphia and less so in Rotterdam, because the greatest religiosity was found among those affiliated with congregations and congregations in Philadelphia engaged in the widest range of community activities.

## 6.3. (RE)DEFINING COMMUNITY?

As we saw in Chapter 2, there is a lively discourse about the notion of community and whether it is increasing or decreasing in modern societies (for example, Ammerman, 1996; Bellah, 1985; Etzioni, 1996; Frug, 2001; MacLeavy, 2008; Putnam, 1995; Wuthnow, 1998). And frequently, these debates are framed within ideas of social capital. Absent from much of this discourse are details about how communities are made, and how bonds are created and enhanced, these steps are the precursors to community cohesion and social capital creation; where the interactions that create these bonds are addressed, they are often dismissed as indicators of mere public familiarity (Blokland & Savage, 2008). Nonetheless, in neighbourhoods that lack a sense of social connectedness, public familiarity is crucial for residents to feel safer, more connected to the neighbourhood and

invested in being responsible for the neighbourhood. In these neighbourhoods residents do not even encounter each other and so *encounter* becomes a prerequisite to cohesion. With the exception of the Association of Islamic Projects in Philadelphia and Dharma in Rotterdam, every organisation functioned as a site of active encounter.

Congregations in both cities were most likely to create spaces where different ethnic groups were forced to encounter each other. These spaces often focussed on the rituals of worship, but because worship in these congregations was interactive and had elements planned and performed by congregation members, congregants were frequently in contact with those unlike themselves. As noted earlier in this chapter, these congregations were also exceptional in that they were made up of members from a range of ethnicities and cultures. Since neighbourhoods reflected a spatial clustering along lines of income, congregations less likely to have a variety of educational and income ranges; the exceptions to this were Roosevelt Mennonite and New Life Church. At Roosevelt Mennonite, this income and educational mix was a result largely of ethnic Mennonites who had come to the city from rural Pennsylvania; the farm land that these congregants owned sharply increased in value as residential sprawl drove land prices up. At New Life Church, this mix resulted from the church's desire to expand and a focus on recruiting higher income congregants who could monetarily support church expansion. In both cases, the church became a physical site and a social site for individuals of varying resource levels to encounter each other. The congregations then acted as sites for building both bonding and bridging capital. Bonding occurred within the congregation: its members shared the same religion and the same religiously-informed values and norms; bridging occurred primarily across ethnic and cultural boundaries, while in some churches, it also occurred across income and education.

The question of social capital has been examined by looking at economic benefits resulting from bridging capital in particular (DeFilippis, 2001; Westlund, 2006); but stronger social ties, that is, social cohesion itself can be an outcome of social capital. In the Rotterdam neighbourhoods in which these organisations were located, high rates of unemployment and high numbers of immigrants combined with fewer ethnic Dutch residents, contacts *between* ethnic and cultural groups were minimal. As van der Laan Bouma-Doff demonstrated in her study of Rotterdam neighbourhoods, interaction between ethnic Dutch and immigrants are especially low in neighbourhoods that have high percentages of immigrants and that fall under the state's "problem neighbourhood" designation (2007). Pinskter further suggested that residents of these kinds of neighbourhoods prefer to focus on family and in-group contacts (2009). The tendency then in these neighbourhoods is for few connections to be built *across* groups. Faith-based organisations provide incidental and deliberate spaces for encounters between members of different ethnic and cultural groups. These opportunities allow members to work together in low stakes, low risk environment. The organisations then, provide some of the benefits of a workplace but without the high risk involved in workplace encounters. For

neighbourhoods with high or average levels of employment, the workplace functions as a site for meeting others from different groups and for extending networks, improving job prospects and being socialized into the norms of the dominant culture. In neighbourhoods with high levels of dependence on state assistance and high unemployment, the radius of residents' lives lies within the neighbourhood and local sites become their primary sites of possible encounter with others.

### *6.3.1. Being countercultural*

A common theme that emerged in conversations with the organisations was their role as actors countering mainstream culture. While they did not always explicitly characterise themselves as a counterculture, organisations made clear distinctions between the social life and culture that they envisioned and were working towards and that of the mainstream. In part, being countercultural meant that they withdrew from outcome-oriented interactions that were transaction-based but this was also a challenge to a consumption driven culture where interactions and status were marked by money. This was the clearest indication that the organisations saw themselves as in fact, *not* agents of neoliberalism, as outside the processes of neoliberalization. Fundamental to neoliberalism is the conceptual imposition of the market rationale in non-economic arenas (Brown, 2006; J. R. Hackworth, 2007), while the organisations explicitly positioned themselves in opposition to market logic. Yet, as noted in section earlier, they tacitly accepted certain neoliberal imperatives.

Cedar Mennonite and Roosevelt Mennonite each offered an understanding of, and approach to, neighbourhood participation and identity that is absent from secular efforts. Both sought to embed themselves in the neighbourhood in a way that was non-commercial, non-consumption and non-*market* oriented. In cities, commercial and especially retail activity often determines neighbourhood identity and vitality – this is the seductiveness of gentrification in creating 'new' neighbourhoods – but these churches suggest that neighbourhood can be (re)created through non-consumption transactions. They re-vitalized the idea of neighbourhood. However, their efforts are not representative of undifferentiated "faith" within "faith-based organisation" but are rather, reflective of a specifically Mennonite approach to community. Mennonites view membership in a congregation as an active choice and commitment to that community; this implies that an individual subscribes to norms of the Mennonite community but also suggests strong individual responsibility and accountability *to* the community. They attempt through the community festival, the community development association and the housing project to extend this idea of being bound by community to those beyond their congregation. This deliberate and intentional framing of community has brought a spark of social cohesion to neighbourhoods that are fragmented and find themselves with no common site upon which to encounter each other – the efforts of these Mennonite congregations have served to remind residents that they are not merely accidental occupants of a particular

space, but can derive meaning from that space and draw upon it to create a viable community. These are efforts towards city vitality and cohesion that state actors desire but have not brought material focus to, but the removal of the strict rules of Habermasian secularism – the stripping of any theological signifiers, for example – allow faith-based organisations to effectively step in and offer religiously driven resources towards secular community and secular cohesion. The Mennonites were specific and intentional in their approach to their churches as places for mediation – between people of different cultures; between new and old residents. The two specific axes of Mennonite mediation have been as a site for interethnic and intercultural negotiation and integration; and second, as an actor attempting to mitigate the effects of gentrification.



## 6.4. THE ROLE OF RELIGION

As we have seen, for some organisations religion played a specific and key role in their ideas and activities around place-making; for all the organisations, however, religion was seen as linked with trust and a holistic social view. In Rotterdam, organisations noted that immigrants were more likely to trust them, regardless of whether the immigrant and the organisation shared a religion or religious beliefs. At the Oude Wijken Pastoraat, Hans noted that because the organisation was Christian, Muslim residents of the neighbourhood would approach him with ideas for Muslim events, hoping to enlist his assistance. He was approached because he was seen as a fellow believer – not of Islam but simply as an adherent of *religion*, rather than a non-believer who lacked any connection to religion. It is perhaps helpful too, that Islam and Christianity share a theological heritage and are both monotheistic faiths and that these implicit commonalities suggest the possibility of shared goals. For immigrants who were Christian, the organisation's link to religion was often even more important. For example, at the Oude Wijken Pastoraat, some of the most enthusiastic users of the organisation's space were older women from Suriname and the Dutch Antilles for whom the structure of White religious ministers was familiar and comforting. This group, Hans noted, sought him out because they wanted "an old white man giving them religion" (Hans, Oude Wijken Pastoraat, interview, June 11, 2009) because such a relationship resembled the colonial religious structures they grew up in. In Rotterdam, immigrants typically originated from societies where religion and religious structures are prominent in the public sphere and religious authority holds significant public sway. For these immigrants the association between religion and *authoritativeness* lingers and so organisations and individuals who are religiously affiliated may carry extra authority. For non-immigrants, who have been raised in a Dutch society that has firstly, undergone clear and visible secularisation through the dismantling of pillarization and secondly, has been publicly and officially characterised as secular, religion may carry less weight. As noted too, in Chapter 4, there is a persistent conflation of religion with immigrants in Dutch society.

In Philadelphia, organisations similarly benefited from the enhanced trust associated with religion. Religion in the U.S. has significant public visibility and authority and religious actors are largely viewed positively in American public culture, to the extent that sociologists have characterised the U.S. as a religious culture unlike that of secular Western Europe (Berger et al., 2008; Habermas, 2006, 2008b). In a milieu friendly towards religion, the faith-based organisations in Philadelphia received a degree of automatic trust. Three of the four organisations in Philadelphia were congregations: as primarily purveyors of worship, the central purpose of congregations is religion, therefore their religiosity hardly needed to be emphasised. The fourth organisation, EPOP, the community organizing group, actively emphasised its religious ties in order to gain its constituents' trust. Interestingly, like the Rotterdam organisations, EPOP's target constituents were primarily immigrants. EPOP encouraged their organisational partners to draw upon the trust bestowed by religion, recommending that organizers attend church services and most importantly, have themselves introduced to the congregation by the presiding cleric. As in Rotterdam, this gave organizers greater implicit authority and provided an entry point into tight knit immigrant communities; community members assumed that the presence of an organizer who was known by the priest or minister meant that the organizer and the related issue they were organising around was vetted and endorsed by the cleric.

For the organisations, in differentiating themselves from the secular sphere, they almost uniformly characterised themselves as emphasising process, relationships and a holistic view of life. They viewed secular approaches as outcome driven and saw themselves as process-oriented. For the organisations in Rotterdam, the secular was clearly represented by the state, in part because the services they provided so often overlapped with those provided by the care networks of the state; and in part, because the Dutch state has been declared to be secular. For the organisations in Philadelphia, because the U.S. state is relatively uninvolved with care networks in comparison with the Netherlands, the secular was represented by non-profits who provided care networks via the Third Sector and were active civil society agents. Regardless of which actors represented the secular, there was universal agreement that the secular was outcome-oriented. Being oriented towards outcomes meant that secular actors were interested in measurable and tangible results and so each action, activity and effort must be tied to clear and visible outcomes. This perception reflects a neoliberalised world where social service providers must limit their activities to those that can be measured and proven to produce benefits. This impetus to show clear links between activities and outcomes is reflected in the increased discussion of and calls for metrics, accountability, reporting structures and so on; in short, neoliberal imperatives pull Third Sector actors into a model of corporatized professionalization. In both cities, the organisations studied saw themselves as outside this pull into neoliberal corporatization because they viewed the religious beliefs that underpinned their work as buffering them from operating in an instrumentalised, outcome-oriented manner. As we saw in Chapters 4 and 5, Christian organisations cited various Biblical verses to support

their attempts to reach the whole person, while Muslim and Hindu organisations relied more strongly upon cultural frames to support their holistic view; in all cases, this was seen to differentiate them from non-religious organisations.

Unlike secular actors who are solely outwardly focussed – that is, their efforts are geared towards their constituents while internal organisational issues are peripheral – for faith-based organisations their internal processes were as important as their externally-oriented activities. They often attributed this internal focus to their religiously-driven holistic view and their rejection of a focus on outcomes. In this, the idea of outcomes was implicitly linked with individuals outside the organisation. In actuality, because one of the organisations' fundamental goals was to transform individuals within the organisation, an outcome was identifiable; it was simply not an external one. The emphasis on internal transformation meant that as long as members of the organisation had experienced personal growth in terms of empathy, theological understanding, or another kind of personal development process, the organisation was successful. The link between type of impact and type of orientation was not straightforward as Table 6.2 illustrates. Some organisations such as Cedar Mennonite and Dharma considered internal transformation through process as their primary criterion for success; in contrast, the AICP goals were intended to only impact their own community – that is, to be internal – but outcome rather than process was most important to them.



Table 6.2. Organisation intent and impact focus

| | Process-oriented | Outcome-oriented |
|---|---|---|
| Internal impact | Cedar Mennonite<br>Dharma<br>Scotts International | Crossroads<br>AICP |
| External impact | Oude Wijken Pastoraat<br>House of Hope | KSA<br>House of Hope<br>De Tafel<br>→New Life<br>Roosevelt Mennonite |

## 6.5. CONVERGING SECULARISM AND NEOLIBERALISM?

The activities and locations of the faith-based we have seen in this study illustrate the processes of neoliberalization and secularism working in concert. The Netherlands may create an environment that is especially conducive to these moves, due in part to the legacy of pillarization (*verzuiling*) (Avest et al., 2007; Hupe, 1993; Spiecker & Steutel, 2001) and to the controversies surrounding the issue of immigration and immigrants in

the Netherlands (Duyvendak & Scholten, 2009; Koopmans & Muis, 2009; Sniderman & Hagendoorn, 2009; Van der Veer, 2006). The latter has created a political and policy landscape that is seeking to both, *control immigrants* – by forcing assimilation – and *to constrain them*, through moves to constrain their access to services. However, those at the receiving end of these policy moves are not always immigrants, sometimes they are indigenous Dutch who are marginalised too but who face the repercussions of efforts driven by the dynamics of the discussion surrounding immigration, ethnicity, tolerance and assimilation. The combination of neoliberalization and anti-immigrant rhetoric introduced opportunities for the work of the Oude Wijken Pastoraat and the Sisters of Charity in particular, as the municipality pulled out of assisting these populations. These activities are clearly part of a roll out phase of neoliberalism where *more* government intervention is created to regulate these populations *out of* government subsidized agencies. At the same time, the drive to secularise – to move to find "relevance" beyond worship or rite driven spaces – draw faith-based organisations into acting as community centres, providing rehabilitation facilities, and so on.

Actually existing secularism allows for a series of compromises that allows for government to accept the participation of faith-based organisations and even seek them out, but it also has altered the internal missions and mechanics of faith organisations. The decline in traditional worship-based participation has forced faith communities to seek "relevance" and to define that relevance in terms that can be readily understood in a secular frame. The marketization of religion through secularisation has prompted faith groups to seek "relevance", to differentiate themselves from other religious groups in a competitive religious marketplace, and in the language of the business-world, to posit themselves as providing "added value" since the simple provision of a deity is no longer competitive.

In contrast to the Dutch situation, the formal relationship of these organisations to the state at any scale – city or national – was limited, reflecting the low level of state intervention and presence in social stability and civil society in the U.S. For these Philadelphia faith-based organisations then, government funding was not as strong a factor as it was in Rotterdam, but also because religion in the U.S. is not seen as outside the mainstream or a gateway to accessing difficult to reach populations, state bodies are less interested in religious partners as unique conduits to particular populations. While faith-based organisations have received a great deal of national attention in the last decade, in reality, funding for them has been limited to those who already have significant resources and can partner with government as social service delivery arms.

As with many Christian groups who believe they have an imperative to proselytise and convert, the Mennonites used their encounters with their neighbours to encourage church attendance: what was striking however, was that explicit religion – worship itself – was secondary to their endeavour. It might be suggested that the mention of the invitation to church attendance automatically de-secularises these interactions; we

would argue, however, for a more nuanced analysis of these exchanges. If uninflected, classical secularism views interactions as *either* religious *or* secular, late secularism, clearly recognises the presence of many layers to an interaction (Baird, 2000); through the lens of a flexible secularism then, all factors can be taken into account without permitting a single one (religion) to eclipse the value and meaning of other elements. In this perspective, their primary purpose – both within their own perceptions and in their behaviour – was in identifying gaps in the care of the neighbourhood: a secular goal using secular tools of analysis.



## 6.6. CONCLUSION

In this chapter, the meaning and implications of the activities of the organisations in this study have been examined. In various ways, the organisations have sought to make place matter by connecting residents to fragmented neighbourhoods; in turn, the organisations have been shaped by their location, becoming, to varying degrees, embedded in place. Their activities have bridged the formal and informal sectors, placing them as mediators between the state's formal regulatory and bureaucratic structures and the lived experience of city residents. Although many of their activities are made clear through various formal reporting structures such as year-end reports some of the organisations' most unusual, and perhaps most important efforts from the perspective of neighbourhood residents are less obvious, more subtle moves that provide spaces for social cohesion and fill in gaps left, and perhaps even created by formal, state-driven systems of care.

In untangling the meaning and position of faith-based organisations in this study, a recurring theme has been the muted contestation of neoliberalism. This contestation is not visible in grand gestures but has occurred instead in the subtle ways that faith-based organisations have sometimes accepted a neoliberal framing and at other times offered a *simultaneous* rejection of neoliberal principles. Neoliberalism's neocommunitarian impulses meshed with the Philadelphia Mennonites' own theological framing of community and so they were easily adopted, yet they also rejected basic neoliberalism's reification of economic exchange and market participation by positioning themselves as counterculturally anti-consumption. Similarly, in Rotterdam, the Oude Wijken Pastoraat acted as a neoliberal agent monitoring a hidden sector while refusing to offer measurable outcomes for working class Dutch residents.

In the following chapter, which concludes this study, I will review how this study has added to the body of knowledge about faith-based organisations and their role in cities. In doing so, I will also consider the further avenues for research suggested by the findings of this study and finally, I will review the policy implications of these findings.

# 7 CONCLUSION

I began this study from a curiosity about the role of religion in the modern putatively secular city and from this broad, macro-scale interest, my attention turned to faith-based organisations as the tangible manifestation of religion in the city, of religion in the epitome of secular places. It quickly became clear that the forces that allowed these organisations a particular and meaningful role in the city were not religion or theology versus secularity, but rather a surprising interplay of neoliberalism and secularism. The neoliberalizing urban carved out a niche for these organisations which, in a context of declining participation in conventional religious spaces and rites, were searching for meaning and a role for themselves.

## 7.1. REVISITING THE RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND DRAWING CONCLUSIONS

In selecting faith-based organisations, I sought to understand the relevance of the element of faith; despite the assertions of faith in their mission statements and other organizing documents, the organisations were engaging in activities that extended beyond the conventional understanding of sacred spaces and religious ritual. One pressing question was: what made these organisations "faith-based" when they appeared to be engaging in very secular service provision and similar activities? Given the element of faith and religion, how was it that the organisations managed to find a role for themselves in secular arenas? Or put another way, how was it that secular spaces seemed to permit these religious organisations? Both spaces of faith and spaces of the secular had to offer some elasticity

to allow faith-based organisations to exist, to persist and to engage in actions that were meaningful. To get to these answers, I began with several straightforward questions: what kinds of activities did faith-based organisations engage in? Why did they engage in those specific activities? What was their role in their neighbourhoods and cities? How did religion influence them? As I asked these questions in the field, they became refined: what was it about the secular sphere that allowed these organisations to do what they did? How did they view these secular gaps? As I reflected upon these questions, and have discussed at greater length in the previous chapter, it became clear that there was a kind of dance between the secular and religious, one that was facilitated by neoliberalism so that this interplay created a niche that for which faith-based organisations were particularly well-suited. We might think of it as an extended negotiation, in which secularism and neoliberalism entwine, creating a helix, the interstices of which can be comfortably inhabited by faith-based organisations.

Previous scholarship has examined faith-based organisations from several different perspectives and scales. At the meso, institutional level, much of this work has been focussed on how organisations are generally constituted and the formal role of faith (Chaves, 2001; Owens, 2006; Sider & Unruh, 2004; Unruh & Sider, 2005); more recently, research has attempted to elucidate the exact role and activities of organisations in particular urban and national contexts (Beaumont & Baker, 2011; Beaumont, 2008; Davelaar, van den Toorn, de Witte, Beaumont, & Kuiper, 2011; Dierckx, Vranken, & Kerstens, 2009; Kearns, Park, & Yankoski, 2005; Kissane, 2008). Undertaking more theoretical reflections about the constitution of civil society, scholars have cast faith-based organisations as part of a "shadow state" that provides welfare and social services (Wolch, 1999). Similarly, Hackworth (Hackworth & Akers, 2011; 2010) has noted that in the U.S., increasingly the rhetorical moves of neoliberalism create specific spaces for faith-based organisations encouraging a kind of marketization in non-economic spheres. Engaging in theoretical terms at the macro-level, with questions of space and secularism, Cloke and Beaumont assert a "postsecular rapprochement" (2012) in which religion and the secular tolerate each other.

My study draws upon this previous work, making linkages between a range of theoretical and empirical scales that are often treated discretely. In observing and analysing the daily, micro-level activity of the organisations, I was able to gain insight into whether the organisations acted in alignment with their explicit institutional framework (the meso-level): often this raised questions about the role of religion in their daily operations, since religion was explicit in mission statements and other organising documents, but operationally implicit and sometimes, arguably, absent. Examining micro-level activity also allowed a view into the complex relationship organisations had with neoliberalism: they defied neoliberalism's emphasis on short-term, concrete and measurable returns, resisting the language of investment and return, but connecting to its accompanying (neo)communitarianism. As I noted in Chapter 2, attention to theoretical scale allows for empirical findings, the data, to modify both meso-level theory and grand theory. In

particular, the processes suggested by the grand theoretical frameworks of neoliberalism and secularism were observed at the micro-level. From these observations, the interplay between the two became apparent, revealing the ongoing negotiation between them. These specific views into the organisations were only possible by adopting participant observation, as well as other methods discussed in Chapter 3. Through the ethnographic immersive nature of participant observation it was possible to better understand how different actors behaved in practise rather than focussing on their aspirational selves. The various components of identity and researcher positionality that emerged also proved useful in accessing elements that are sometimes hidden in more formal research approaches. In Rotterdam, my position as an outsider fostered greater disclosure, by immigrants, of the tensions between immigrants and the indigenous White Dutch. Immigrant informants, although hesitant, revealed that the social cohesion that indigenous White Dutch-led was often not inclusive and driven instead towards propagating a normative Dutch community.



The process of constant comparison has been central to this study and in doing so, it has enhanced our understanding of faith-based organisations by offering a new comparative perspective that recognises the significance of the interplay between neoliberalism and secularism. In adopting a comparative perspective that specifically juxtaposes a putatively secular nation (the Netherlands) against a putatively religious one (the U.S.A), it has been possible to discern common threads that have encouraged and facilitated these organisations in very different national contexts.

While one often begins from an understanding of discrete and bounded conceptions, as this project developed, the research findings underlined the permeability of boundaries: between various theoretical scales, between the secular and religious, and between scales of place. The informants underlined the paradox created by secularism where its very unfolding alters the nature and expression of religion. Religion undergoes some transformations in order to persist, but these transformations appear secular: the dissonance created by this was highlighted by the informant who questioned whether it mattered that he was religious and serving the community in a faith-based organisation. As he noted, he would have sought out the same path of service whether he believed in a deity or not; for him the contribution of religion was uncertain because the boundaries between religion and the secular were fluid. Similarly, in the role of place and the fostering of a place-based community identity, local, neighbourhood ties flowed through to the scales of city and national identities. Facilitating community cohesion and connections to macro and meso scale identities meant offering a site that allowed for fluidity and paradox.

## 7.2. FURTHER RESEARCH DIRECTIONS

This study has taken a multi-site comparative approach to investigating faith-based organisations. Drawing on the existing literatures on each site, it has been possible to build upon previous studies and so gain a greater depth of analysis. Despite the additional insights

offered by this research study, several gaps remain and the study also raises new questions suggesting directions for future research. The literature on faith-based organisations in the U.S was particularly rich, however, most studies looked at aggregate congregational activities or formal, government funded non-profit social service provision. Although they were writing separately, both Chaves and Cnaan and Boddie noted in 2002 that there was a paucity of research on faith-based organisations (Chaves, 2002; Cnaan & Boddie, 2002); in terms of micro-level observation and everyday life, this remains largely unchanged. In the Netherlands, research on faith-based organisations in general is sparser yet.

The findings from my study point to a clear link between faith-based organisations and immigrants where faith-based organisations often see themselves as agents of integration and assimilation. Current research on faith in the Netherlands falls roughly into three strains: the first is concerned with mainline religious decline; the second with the rise of New Age and spirituality oriented practises; and the last addresses the robustness of immigrant churches. However, this last strain, which this study is most closely connected to, views religion as relatively contained and so focuses primarily on acts of worship and theological variations. What is needed in addition to this is research attention to the place of immigrant churches in the wider Dutch context as well as attention to how immigrants impact mainline churches. The sites where immigrants and ethnic Dutch meet and where religious, social and cultural identity is enacted, negotiated and managed offer promising insights into the future relationship between immigrants and ethnic Dutch. In other words, in what ways do these faith-based sites offer a structure that differs from other attempts to encourage cross-ethnic interactions? While religion is often cast as an immigrant pursuit, even in immigrant-focussed organisations, often half or more members are ethnically Dutch; how do these members understand social and cultural identities as participants in an "immigrant pursuit"? What might this co-existence of indigenous and non-indigenous in the Netherlands and a range of ethnic diversity in the U.S., tell us about paths that are alternatives to an ethnic segregation? These future research directions might continue to explore the demarcations between the secular and religious, perhaps with particular attention to the question of various secular theories of justice and ethics in relation to the idea of "theo-ethics" suggested by Cloke (2010). Are faith-based organisations fostering a re-emergence of theologically-based understandings of justice? Since many of these discussions have emphasized, almost exclusively, a Christian theology – and one that often leans towards Protestantism – what spaces will be available for other religions' frameworks of justice and ethics? Future research on faith-based organisations should be undertaken in a range of directions so that we may fully unpack their role and the possibilities they hold.

## 7.3. POLICY IMPLICATIONS

Recognizing neoliberalism's role in drawing faith-based organisations into their roles as mediators, service providers and facilitators of community cohesion, among others, leads

us to consider the policy implications of this study's findings. The relationship between each faith-based organisations and the state has been varied and as has been seen in the previous chapter, the ways in which the organisations understand their connection to the state is often implicit and tangled. However, in terms of direct support, via state funds, faith actors who were interested in community building tended not to view government as an effective or desirable partner in the process, believing instead that their efforts would be more productive if they maintained autonomy. While faith actors who were less concerned with broader community development, viewed state funds more opportunistically, as resources available for the taking if mission statements and goals could accommodate minor adjustments to meet government criteria. If the goal of state support is to facilitate community cohesion, then how can policy be structured to encourage the former faith actors, while limiting the latter? In part, the secular state is hampered by having to ignore theological motivations and flatten differences between actors to fit into the binary of religious/secular. That is, organisations are seen to be only religious or not religious, rather than motivated by a desire to broaden community building versus proselytization, for example. My critique here is that in ignoring theological nuance, which is the fundamental motivator for religious actors, state actors miss an important opportunity to refine the criteria for funding. That is, when faith groups are theologically driven to offer services to non-co-religionists, their activities are more likely to align with state goals. The New Life church in Rotterdam, for example, cites as a primary mission, "ministering to drug addicts"; similarly, Oxford Mennonite in Philadelphia places a mission to the neighbourhood as central to its identity; while the Oude Wijkenpastoraat draws on Baart's presence theory to emphasise neighbourhood embeddedness. Ignoring theological motivation as a criterion means that much government funding for "faith-based" organisations is unnuanced and therefore often ineffective. Of course, if government agencies were to evaluate funding applications based on theological characteristics, a Pandora's box of favouritism may be opened up: would the state be suggesting that one religion is better than another? The (secular) state must decide what is most important: the outcome of funding or the appearance of even-handedness that in implementation favours the resource savvy rather than those who may most effectively contribute to increased social cohesion.



The organisations in this study encountered secularism in the kind of rapprochement that Cloke and Beaumont (2012) have asserted, however, my cases have suggested that the interaction is *mutually* transformative. It is an interaction that blurs the boundaries between secular activity and religion not simply when viewed externally, but also for the individuals *within* the boundaries of these religiously-linked institutions. In Rotterdam, the very individuals who were assumed to hold the banner of religion were often uncertain as to why the work they did might be considered "faith-based". Even as they understood that their engagement reflected their religious beliefs, they were hesitant to draw a bright line around their work signifying that it was a manifestation of solely of religion and could not *also* be secular. Neoliberalisation contributed to this sense of uncertainty: on one hand,

its drive towards government retraction in favour of private actors created opportunities for faith-based organisations; on the other hand, however, the neoliberal dictate that actors must produce measurable and clearly demarcated results stood in opposition to the long-term, holistic and intangible investments that faith-based organisations made. Faith-based organisations benefitted from expanding neoliberalism, but also offered resistance to it, for the most part holding firm to the value of interactions and activities that were not readily measurable.

From this, one might surmise that faith-based organisations may be heralds and beacons of hope and positive change in secular cities, yet the conclusions I have arrived at suggest tensions and contradictions. In reflecting upon what I had discovered during the course of my research, I came to conclude that the work that these organisations performed highlighted an increasing disengagement with the fundamentals of a socially just society that we have expected from government in democratic wealthy industrialized countries. The gaps created by neoliberalism, which allow the faith-based organisations to occupy these particular spaces in cities, are gaps because government has chosen to withdraw. It is telling that the sphere that government has chosen to withdraw from is the sphere of human care and community building. It is perhaps equally bleak that the organisations that want to occupy this space – that is, those who desire an institutional commitment to a socially just and equitable society – are small and although well-intentioned, they are institutionally ill-equipped to offer an adequate replacement. In Rotterdam, as the New Life congregation illustrated, efforts to develop substance abuse support houses met subtle opposition from city officials who used physical zoning designations as well as central planning imperatives putatively intended to create a greater income mix in the neighbourhood, to prevent service extensions. The congregation, whose strengths lay in creating community cohesion and fostering a dynamic sense of community building, was not skilled in the arcana needed to navigate the city's planning constraints. Equally, the city might have recognized the benefits to the neighbourhood, if the mention of religion had been absent. In Philadelphia, the Beaumont Initiative clearly illustrated that the congregation was ill-equipped to address the technical aspects of creating affordable housing. Cedar Mennonite was eager to actively facilitate and bolster its community by offering improved and affordable housing units, yet they discovered that their determination was outstripped by the pressing need for expertise about construction and renovation, and as importantly, for the skilled personnel to navigate the regulatory and policy frameworks that govern affordable housing. In both cases, at the outset, the organisations eager to use their energies and resources to (re)shape fragile communities and were left disheartened and uncertain about whether they should continue to search for ways to contribute to these communities. This is a loss both to the broad neighbourhood community and to the faith-based communities and organisations. The neighbourhood community loses energy, attention and resources that might help it gain a more stable footing, while the faith-based communities and organisations suffer a loss of

hope and the possibility to be internally transformed through their community work. These outcomes of loss are perhaps more tragic when one recognizes the rhetorical moves that often roused faith-based organisations. This has been most apparent in the U.S. where political and policy rhetoric has asserted that faith-based organisations specifically are better at providing some services, resulting in various government agencies and programs created to encourage faith-based organisations to provide these services (Hackworth & Akers, 2011; Owens, 2006). In the Netherlands, this has taken the form of conflating faith and ethnicity so that De Tafel (Chapter 4) is sought after putatively to guide government and Rotterdam's many churches are suddenly reified as conduits to the city's immigrants (Castillo Guerra, Glashouwer, & Kregting, 2008). In other words, at various points faith-based organisations have been told that they could access government resources to provide services and in fact, that this is something they *should* do, yet they have also not been given the equipment needed to do so. Given these challenges, what then is the future of faith-based organisations?



## 7.4. THE FUTURE OF FAITH-BASED ORGANISATIONS

The ways in which neoliberalism and secularism have intersected to permit a role for faith-based organisations could not have been anticipated twenty years ago. While the neoliberal argument for government retraction was gaining traction politically and socially, it seemed unlikely that faith-based organisations might provide a bridging service, not least because religious adherence and participation had been in decline for some time. The unexpected surge of interest in – and concern about – Islam, the search for a way to connect with immigrant communities and the willingness of faith-based organisations to adapt to secular imperatives, have converged to create a gap that faith-based organisations have moulded themselves to fit. Given these unforeseen developments, I hesitate to anticipate the future of faith-based organisations; yet since these organisations and their role are still in the early stages of (trans)formation and adaptation, we might speculate as to the next stages of their engagement.

Although the organisations in Philadelphia and Rotterdam bear similarities in their activities and in their local impact, their very different contexts suggest that their future roles will diverge. The continuing role of faith-based organisations is very much dependent on their national contexts. In Rotterdam, because of the insistence on faith as a phenomenon that belongs to immigrants, it is likely that faith-based organisations will continue to receive attention and find a clear role for themselves, even being sought out. The difficulties that the Netherlands has encountered in accepting non-white immigrants and in particular, Muslim immigrants, suggests that faith-based organisations will persist in being seen as necessary conduits to immigrant communities. The effect of conflating a religious identity and ethnic identity, as happens with any ethnic community which is also predominantly Muslim, will likely reify the separation of these ethnic communities

from broader Dutch society. In the absence of the intense focus on Islam, immigrants from Turkey, Morocco, Afghanistan and so on, may have developed hyphenated Dutch identities that were connected to their national community. An immigrant from Morocco might have become a Dutch-Moroccan, just as one from Afghanistan might have become a Dutch-Afghani; however, the singular "presumptive cultural identity" (Calhoun, 2005, p. ix) that is imposed on individuals who have any tie to Islam erases this possibility. Instead of the hyphenated ethnic or national identity that immigrants in many cultures develop, these immigrants simply become "Muslim". Therefore it is likely that policy makers will view service provision under the rubric of an Islamic organisation to be a necessity. Since informants in Christian organisations noted that Muslims seemed to prefer their organisations, even though they were not Muslim, for the sole reason that they were *religious*, the continuing role of Christian organisations might be tied both to the large Muslim population and to perceptions of Dutch secularity. The more secular mainstream Dutch society seems, perhaps the more likely it is, that Muslims will prefer Christian organisations in addition to Muslim ones. Interestingly, then secularism would contribute to the need for faith-based organisations as believers of all faiths increasingly view all belief in opposition to all secularism, creating a different kind of "presumptive cultural identity" (Calhoun, 2005, p. ix): one that creates a clear divide between believers and non-believers.

In Philadelphia, faith-based organisations seem likely to follow the cycles typical of many small non-profit organisations. Like many organisations in the non-profit sector, they spring from a deep-seated but sometimes nebulous urge to help, to contribute to their communities, but they bloom and wilt quickly in the face of the institutional realities of limited technical expertise, funding and personnel constraints. Faith-based organisations in and of themselves do not have the capacity to reach beyond, what is in the end, a limited resource base. In the time since I completed the fieldwork in Philadelphia, the global financial crisis has taken an especially severe toll on the U.S. and on its government spending; in a nation already inclined towards government retraction, freezing and removing government funding in arenas of community and care has been a natural response in deep recession. The decline in funding availability has impacted the non-profit sector, with fewer organisations blooming and many more wilting. In light of this, in the short term, faith-based organisations are unlikely to be able to undertake projects on the scale of the Beaumont Initiative, yet at a historical moment where high unemployment levels and economic uncertainty rule the day, their hopefulness may be most needed. In the longer term, unless these organisations recognise that they are too resource-poor to address many of the community building tasks that they aspire too, they will continue to loop through a cycle that makes their impact outside their faith community difficult to ascertain. It may be possible to alter the cycle if faith communities begin to think in terms of forming loose co-operatives so that they could pool their technical and other resources. A co-operative model, where resources are shared and drawn upon as needed would

decrease the likelihood that organisations could both bring projects to completion and persist to produce outcomes that would be meaningful to the faith community as well as the broader neighbourhood community.

Examining faith-based organisations comparatively has revealed that in many ways, the utility and impact of faith-based organisations is dependent on the national context. However, despite national differences, their persistence and particular role is a result of the macro-scale processes of neoliberalism and secularism. As agents within the shadow state, they are creatures of a neoliberal aversion to collective responsibility for the common good via government structures. In an implicit recognition of this, the organisations examined here offered their own resistances to neoliberalism; yet because of their small scale, the impact of this resistance is uncertain.

# SAMENVATTING

In dit proefschrift wordt de rol van op geloof gebaseerde organisaties in de Nederlandse stad Rotterdam en de Amerikaanse stad Philadelphia onderzocht. De aanleiding voor het onderzoek was de persistentie van religie in ogenschijnlijk seculiere samenlevingen en contexten en daaraan verwante vragen over de rol en de relatie van op geloof gebaseerde organisaties binnen de buurt en de niet-gelovige gemeenschap. In onderzoek naar gemarginaliseerde stadsbuurten wordt de 'wetenschappelijke volkswijsheid' aangehouden dat kerken ondanks verminderde belangstelling en toenemende armoede blijven voortbestaan; dit argument heeft geleid tot tegengeluiden dat er in gemarginaliseerde buurten, ondanks het grote aantal kerken, geen verbondenheid bestaat tussen de kerk en de buurt (Ammerman 1997; McRoberts 2005). Op institutioneel meso-niveau is veel van dit onderzoek gericht geweest op hoe organisaties over het algemeen zijn samengesteld en wat de formele rol van het geloof is (Chaves, 2001; Owens, 2006; Sider & Unruh, 2004; Unruh & Sider, 2005b); meer recent is geprobeerd via onderzoek meer licht te werpen op de exacte rol en activiteiten van organisaties in specifieke stedelijke en nationale contexten (Beaumont, 2008b; Beaumont & Baker, 2011; Davelaar et al., 2011; Dierckx, Vranken, & Kerstens, 2009; K. Kearns, Park, & Yankoski, 2005; Kissane, 2008). Wetenschappers die zich hebben verdiept in meer theoretische bespiegelingen over de samenstelling van de burgermaatschappij, beschouwen op geloof gebaseerde organisaties als onderdeel van een 'schaduwstaat' die welzijns- en sociale voorzieningen biedt (Wolch, 1999). Zo heeft ook Hackworth (2010a; J. Hackworth & Akers, 2011) opgemerkt dat in de Verenigde Staten de retorische manoeuvres van het neoliberalisme steeds meer specifieke ruimten creëren voor op geloof gebaseerde organisaties waardoor een soort 'marketisering' in niet-

economische kringen wordt gestimuleerd. Als er op macroniveau in theoretische termen wordt gesproken over ruimte en secularisme, hebben Cloke en Beaumont het over een 'postseculiere toenadering' (2012) waarin religie en de seculiere wereld elkaar tolereren.

Waarom is religie zo persistent in moderne samenlevingen die een tijd lang gedoemd leken zich zonder het geloof verder te ontwikkelen? Voor een toenemend aantal wetenschappers kan het antwoord op deze vraag worden afgeleid uit de rol van religie in steden en de persistentie van sommige op geloof gebaseerde organisaties en de opkomst van nieuwe organisaties. Er begon zich nog een thema af te tekenen: mogelijk heeft het secularisme een 'enabling twin' gevonden in het neoliberalisme. Tijdens onderzoek naar problemen rond sociale uitsluiting in Nederland begon Justin Beaumont (2008a; Beaumont & Nicholls, 2007a; Beaumont & Noordegraaf, 2007) de privatiserende en 'marketiserende' elementen van het neoliberalisme in verband te brengen met de veranderende rol van op geloof gebaseerde organisaties. Voor de Amerikaanse context suggereerde Jason Hackworth dat de retorische manoeuvres van het neoliberalisme ruimten creëerden die bestemd waren voor op geloof gebaseerde organisaties (Hackworth, 2010a, 2010b; Hackworth & Akers, 2011). Een groeiend aantal studies wijst op een verstrengeling tussen secularisme en neoliberalisme die de persistentie van religie zou kunnen verklaren als een semi-institutionele rol op meso-niveau. Uit een project binnen het Europese Zevende Kaderprogramma voor Onderzoek, *Faith-Based Organisations and Exclusion in European Cities*, ook bekend als FACIT, bleek dat in zeven Europese landen op geloof gebaseerde organisaties waardevolle voorzieningen boden en een belangrijke rol speelden in het opvullen van hiaten die waren ontstaan doordat de neoliberale staat zich had teruggetrokken. In deze studies werden verschijnselen in Europa en de VS genoemd die verrassende overeenkomsten vertoonden – dit was onverwacht, gezien het feit dat Europa vaak als seculier en de VS als religieus wordt beschouwd (Berger, Davie, & Fokas, 2008; Davie, 2006). Het project voor dit proefschrift is ontwikkeld in reactie op deze onverwachte overeenkomsten, die bovendien suggereren dat steden misschien bepaalde unieke kenmerken hebben waardoor ze vergelijkbare reacties op religie oproepen.

Gezien de conventionele polarisatie van de VS en Europa leek de tijd rijp voor een vergelijkend onderzoek. Nederland wordt altijd gezien als een toonbeeld van secularisme, gecentraliseerde planning en rationele overheidsdiensten. Opvallend genoeg is het in de VS en Nederland het christendom dat altijd de rol van de dominante, inheemse religie heeft ingenomen en dat in beide samenlevingen persistent is gebleken. Hoewel zich ook andere religies hebben gemanifesteerd, waaronder vrij recent de islam, domineert het inheemse christendom nog steeds. De opkomst van andere religies heeft de discussie over religie doen verschuiven naar een breder kader en tegelijkertijd een niet erg heimelijke angst voor andere religies blootgelegd. Maar deze angst heeft niets te maken met theologische verschillen of een conflict tussen godheden, maar meer met het creëren van vertrouwen, gedrag binnen de gemeenschap en begrip voor gemeenschapsreligie binnen de context van veranderende instituten en beleid.

Een hiermee verband houdende en vaak impliciete vraag die zich aandient wanneer een onderzoeker in de stad het onderwerp van op geloof gebaseerde organisaties introduceert, is waarom religie in deze stedelijke omgevingen speciale aandacht verdient. Het voorafgaande argument suggereert dat een belangrijk aspect van het belang van religie de persistentie, de onveranderende aanwezigheid van religie is. Een tweede argument dat misschien moet worden genoemd, is dat ook secularisme op zijn beurt heeft laten zien persistent te zijn (zie bijvoorbeeld de fulminerende argumenten van Dawkins, 2006; Hitchens, 2007). Misschien is het moment gekomen om te accepteren dat deze twee gedachtelijnen die strijden om de ziel (of lichamen zonder ziel) van de moderne burger beide even 'weerspannig' zijn. Religie in verschillende permutaties en secularisme hebben zich beide, elk op een eigen dringende manier, een blijvende plaats verworven. Sterker nog, hoewel ze ongemakkelijk naast elkaar bestaan en vaak in conflict zijn in theoretische en filosofische discussies, is de empirische werkelijkheid die door dit onderzoek wordt gesuggereerd dat ze zich in het harde dagelijkse leven in de stad vermengen en steeds weer overvloeien in of zich terugtrekken uit gedeelde en overlappende ruimten. Cloke en Beaumont (2012) zien dit als een *toenadering* tussen twee concepten die elkaar behoedzaam in de gaten houden, maar een *toenadering* houdt in dat beide bij hun eigen standpunt blijven en hun onderscheidende karakter handhaven – zullen we, nu de rol van religie verandert en religie op zoek is naar een nieuwe relevantie, een samensmelting zien waardoor het moeilijker wordt om seculier en religieus van elkaar te onderscheiden? Ik pleit ervoor dat aanhangers van religie en secularisme, in plaats van elkaar behoedzaam in de gaten te houden, met elkaar moeten leren leven zonder te concurreren, en elkaar niet alleen maar moeten tolereren, maar accepteren.

## ONDERZOEKSVRAGEN

Bij de selectie van op geloof gebaseerde organisaties was mijn doel om de relevantie van het element geloof te begrijpen; ondanks de geloofsverklaringen in hun missionstatement en andere officiële documenten leken de organisaties zich bezig te houden met activiteiten die verder reikten dan een conventioneel begrip van heilige plaatsen en religieuze rituelen. Eén prangende vraag was: wat maakt deze organisaties 'op geloof gebaseerd' terwijl ze zich lijken bezig te houden met heel seculiere dienstverlening en vergelijkbare activiteiten? Hoe is het de organisaties gelukt, gezien het element van geloof en religie, om een rol voor zichzelf te vinden in seculiere werkgebieden? Anders gezegd: hoe kan het dat seculiere ruimten deze religieuze organisaties lijken toe te laten? Zowel de geloofsruimte als de seculiere ruimte moest enige flexibiliteit bieden om op geloof gebaseerde organisaties toe te laten te bestaan, te blijven bestaan en zich bezig te houden met zinvolle activiteiten. Om deze vragen te beantwoorden, ben ik begonnen met een aantal eenvoudige vragen: met welk soort activiteiten houden op geloof gebaseerde organisaties zich bezig? Waarom houden ze zich met die specifieke activiteiten bezig? Wat is hun rol in hun buurt en stad?

Op welke manier worden ze beïnvloed door religie? Toen ik deze vragen in de praktijk stelde, werden ze gedetailleerder: wat is het precies in de seculiere ruimte waardoor deze organisaties kunnen doen wat ze doen? Hoe kijken ze aan tegen deze seculiere hiaten? Toen ik nadacht over deze vragen, werd duidelijk dat zich een soort dans voltrok tussen seculier en religieus die werd gefaciliteerd door het neoliberalisme en zo een niche creëerde waar met name op geloof gebaseerde organisaties goed in pasten. We zouden het kunnen zien als een uitgebreide dialoog waarin secularisme en neoliberalisme zich verstrengelen tot een helix met tussenruimten waarin op geloof gebaseerde organisaties zich goed thuis voelen.

## STRUCTUUR VAN HET PROEFSCHRIFT

In hoofdstuk 2 positioneer ik op geloof gebaseerde organisaties binnen het theoretische landschap. Hierbij ga ik uit van een interdisciplinair perspectief dat tot doel heeft disciplinaire elementen met elkaar te verbinden om zo de stedelijke realiteit van op geloof gebaseerde organisaties beter te begrijpen. Vanuit de geografie maak ik gebruik van discussies over neoliberalisme en vanuit de sociologie van discussies over secularisme. Het neoliberalisme biedt een verklarend kader voor de processen van devolutie en privatisering die ruimten creëren waarin op geloof gebaseerde organisaties verschillende dienstverlenende activiteiten kunnen uitvoeren. De persistentie van het element geloof in deze organisaties is het gevolg van de ontwikkeling van secularisme vanuit een concept dat recht tegenover religie stond en religie afschilderde als anti-modern tot een concept dat ruimte biedt voor religie en zich er flexibel aan aanpast. Op basis van de literatuur over neoliberalisme en secularisme stel ik dat op geloof gebaseerde organisaties binnen de groep van neoliberalisme en secularisme zijn gesitueerd en dat hun persistentie en activiteiten de convergentie van deze twee processen illustreren. De verklarende kracht van theorieën van neoliberalisme en secularisme liggen op het macro-niveau, terwijl de op geloof gebaseerde organisaties in dit onderzoek heel lokaal zijn; om het verband tussen het macro-niveau en het lokale niveau te begrijpen, maak ik gebruik van de theorieën van sociaal kapitaal, sociale cohesie en gemeenschap uit het middengebied.

In hoofdstuk 3 bespreek ik de kennistheoretische principes en de methoden die zijn gebruikt om gegevens te verzamelen en te analyseren. Het onderzoek is benaderd vanuit een interesse in de invloed van machtsstromen op het dagelijks leven van gewone bewoners; als zodanig is het gepositioneerd in feministische en postkoloniale kennistheorieën die aandringen op reflexiviteit en speciale aandacht voor dagelijkse ontmoetingen en geografieën (Cloke, Cooke, Cursons, Milbourne, & Widdowfield, 2000; Dyck, 2005; Rose, 1997). Deze positionering leidde tot de selectie van onderbouwde theorieën zodat de gegevens de theorie konden ondersteunen. Door een iteratieve relatie te onderhouden tussen gegevens en theorie zouden de gegevens de kern van het onderzoek kunnen vormen; aanpassingen in de theorie en de analyse zouden voortkomen

uit de dagelijkse wereld van de informanten. Om een beter beeld van deze dagelijkse realiteiten te krijgen, is de vergelijkende casestudymethode gebruikt om de rol van op geloof gebaseerde organisaties in beide steden beter te begrijpen. Omdat dit een kwalitatief onderzoek is waarin een onderwerp wordt onderzocht dat vaak wordt gezien als controversieel, was het van groot belang om de positionaliteit in het oog te blijven houden en de informanten als reflexieve onderzoeker te benaderen. In dit hoofdstuk bespreek ik de percepties en problemen van de informanten in het onderzoek die zich zorgen maakten over een onderzoek naar hun religie en religieuze activiteiten; ik ga verder in op de ethische problemen die ik ben tegengekomen en ik beschrijf het kader van reflectie en dialoog dat ik heb gebruikt om mijn positie als het onderzoeksinstrument in de praktijk te bepalen. Het hoofdstuk wordt afgesloten met een aantal aantekeningen over de beperkingen van de gebruikte methoden en de problemen die ik ben tegengekomen bij het verzamelen van de gegevens.

In hoofdstuk 4 begint het empirische gedeelte van dit proefschrift: in dit hoofdstuk worden op geloof gebaseerde organisaties in Rotterdam onderzocht. De stad Rotterdam wordt in context geplaatst, zowel binnen Nederland als binnen de secularisatieprocessen zoals deze zich in Nederland hebben ontwikkeld. Dit is met name interessant omdat er in Nederland gedurende het grootste deel van de 20ste eeuw sprake was van verzuiling, waardoor religie centraal stond in de maatschappelijke dienstverlening en in verschillende andere aspecten van het openbare leven. Hoewel er al geruime tijd geen sprake meer is van verzuiling, zijn de restanten ervan nog duidelijk aanwezig op het niveau van meso-instellingen (Hupe, 1993). Na deze achtergrond worden in dit hoofdstuk de activiteiten onderzocht van de negen organisaties die in dit onderzoek zijn opgenomen. De organisaties wezen de immigranten in Rotterdam aan als hun belangrijkste doelgroep en ze probeerden op zowel formele als informele manieren diensten te verlenen aan de lokale immigrantenpopulatie. De organisaties verschilden van elkaar voor wat betreft de mate waarin ze immigranten in hun organisatiestructuur integreerden en met name hun aanpak in taalgebruik zorgde voor een onderscheid tussen organisaties met veel immigranten en organisaties met vooral niet-immigranten. De eerste groep organisaties was over het algemeen flexibel in het taalgebruik en maakte vaak actief gebruik van andere talen dan het Nederlands, terwijl de tweede groep taal als een belangrijk hulpmiddel voor integratie zag; hun weerstand tegen andere talen illustreerde hun perceptie van zichzelf als integratie-instrument. Hoewel de nadruk duidelijk op immigranten lag, was deze gekoppeld aan een impliciete aandacht voor de ruimte; de op geloof gebaseerde organisaties in Rotterdam waren niet alleen gevormd door hun buurt, ze zetten zich op hun beurt ook in om de buurt te vormen. De prominente aandacht voor immigranten positioneerde de organisaties bovendien als de verbindende schakel tussen immigranten en de stad en de Nederlandse samenleving als geheel; met hun activiteiten probeerden de organisaties een band te vormen tussen de bewoners en hun buurt, hun stad en het land. De rol van religie binnen de organisaties vormde een interessante paradox: hoewel de

organisaties waren gebaseerd op en afgeleid van een geloof, werd de rol van religie vaak gebagatelliseerd en in sommige gevallen zelfs ontkend als belangrijk element.

In hoofdstuk 5 gaan we van Rotterdam naar de op geloof gebaseerde organisaties in Philadelphia. Omdat Philadelphia een stad van buurten is, ging de aandacht uit naar vier organisaties waarvan er drie in een bepaalde buurt waren gevestigd, terwijl de vierde vooral gericht was op activiteiten in de hele stad. De buurtgerichte organisaties waren actief in West Philadelphia en Northeast Philadelphia, buurten die zich beide in een overgangsfase bevinden. In West Philadelphia voltrekt zich een proces van gentrificatie dat voornamelijk blanke kapitaalkrachtigen uit de middenklasse aantrekt, die de zwarte Amerikanen uit de arbeidersklasse vervangen die hier al lange tijd wonen; Northeast Philadelphia is aan het veranderen van een enclave van etnische blanken (Ieren en Italianen) in een gebied waar vooral zwarte Amerikanen en immigranten wonen. Deze veranderingen in de bevolkingssamenstelling in combinatie met langetermijneffecten van het verlies van industrie hebben ervoor gezorgd dat deze buurten sociaal versplinterd zijn geraakt. Sommige organisaties waren zich duidelijk bewust van het gebrek aan sociale cohesie en maatschappelijke instellingen waar bewoners zich op konden richten. Op basis van dit bewustzijn hebben deze organisaties projecten ontwikkeld om zich te positioneren als een plek waar buurtcohesie kan worden opgebouwd; het belangrijkste hierbij was een begrip van de gemeenschap dat gestructureerd was en bovendien breed genoeg om niet alleen aanhangers van de eigen religie maar ook buurtbewoners te omvatten. Twee van deze projecten worden in meer detail onderzocht omdat ze de manieren illustreren waarop deze organisaties zich proberen te mengen in buurtprocessen. Het eerste onderzoek betrof een initiatief dat een tegenwicht moest bieden aan het gentrificatieproces. De organisatie probeerde verlaten woningen te renoveren om betaalbare woonruimte te creëren, zodat bewoners die door hoge huren werden verdreven in hun buurt konden blijven wonen. Het tweede project bestond uit een serie activiteiten die waren bedoeld om de buurt fysieke plekken te bieden waar de bewoners elkaar konden ontmoeten en om een aantal blijvende activiteiten op te zetten om de onderlinge bekendheid te vergroten, zodat bewoners elkaar zouden herkennen als leden van dezelfde gemeenschap.

In hoofdstuk 6 analyseer ik de betekenis, de implicaties en de waarde van de activiteiten die worden ondernomen door op geloof gebaseerde organisaties in Rotterdam en Philadelphia. Er zijn drie thema's te herkennen die typisch zijn voor de organisaties in beide steden. Op de eerste plaats scheppen de organisaties, al dan niet bewust, een band tussen de bewoners en de plaats. Voor de organisaties vormt de erkenning dat de buurt, stad of nationale staat een element is dat een rol speelt in het leven van de bewoners een belangrijk onderdeel van hun inspanningen tegen versplintering en het creëren van een gevoel van sociale cohesie. Op de tweede plaats houden de organisaties zich bezig met het (opnieuw) creëren van een gemeenschap. Ze doen dit op uiteenlopende manieren, maar een rode draad is dat hun ideeën over wat een gemeenschap is niets met cultuur te maken hebben. Met andere woorden, organisaties zien hun inspanningen als

afwijkend van het heersende sociale en culturele leven. De rol van religie ten slotte is veel onduidelijker dan men zou verwachten op basis van hun op geloof gebaseerde aard. De organisaties bleken vaak te worstelen met de vraag welke rol religie voor hen speelde; in sommige gevallen probeerden ze religie grotendeels buiten beschouwing te laten, terwijl ze in andere gevallen religie juist zagen als het uitgangspunt van al hun activiteiten. Ongeacht hun uitgangspunt hielp religie hen om een holistisch langetermijnbeeld te vormen van hun relatie met hun gemeenschapsleden, waarmee ze zich afzetten tegen resultaatgerichte neoliberale efficiëntie. Tot besluit kijk ik, op basis van deze empirische bevindingen, opnieuw naar de rol van neoliberalisme en secularisme in de activiteiten van deze organisaties en in hoe ze zijn gepositioneerd.

In hoofdstuk 7, het laatste hoofdstuk van dit proefschrift, beschrijf ik op welke manieren dit onderzoek verbanden heeft gelegd tussen een aantal theoretische en empirische stelsels die vaak apart van elkaar worden gebruikt. Door de dagelijkse activiteiten van de organisaties op microniveau te observeren en analyseren, heb ik inzicht gekregen in de vraag of organisaties handelden volgens hun expliciete institutionele kader (het meso-niveau); dit riep vaak vragen op over de rol van religie in hun dagelijkse activiteiten, omdat religie expliciet in hun missionstatement en andere officiële documenten werd genoemd, maar in de praktijk impliciet was en soms zelfs helemaal afwezig. Het onderzoek naar activiteiten op microniveau bood bovendien inzicht in de complexe relatie die organisaties hebben met neoliberalisme: ze trotseerden de nadruk op concrete en meetbare kortetermijnresultaten van het neoliberalisme en weigerden in termen van investering en winst te praten, maar voelden zich wel verbonden met het bijbehorende (neo)communitarisme. Er is met name op microniveau gekeken naar de processen die worden geopperd door de grote theoretische kaders van neoliberalisme en secularisme. Dankzij deze observaties werd de wisselwerking en de voortdurende dialoog tussen de twee stromingen duidelijk. Deze specifieke visies op de organisaties waren alleen mogelijk dankzij participerende observatie en de andere methoden die zijn beschreven in hoofdstuk 3. Dankzij de etnografisch immersieve aard van participerende observatie was het mogelijk om een beter begrip te vormen van hoe verschillende spelers zich in de praktijk gedroegen, in plaats van dat de aandacht uitging naar hun eigen ambities. De verschillende componenten van identiteits- en onderzoekerpositionaliteit die naar boven kwamen bleken ook nuttig in het toegankelijk maken van elementen die soms verborgen blijven in meer formele onderzoeksmethoden. In Rotterdam leidde mijn positie als buitenstaander tot meer onthullingen van immigranten over de spanningen tussen immigranten en blanke, autochtone Nederlanders. Informanten van de immigranten vertelden, ofschoon aarzelend, dat de sociale cohesie in organisaties die door blanke, autochtone Nederlanders werden geleid vaak niet inclusief was en in plaats daarvan meer gericht was op het creëren van een normatieve Nederlandse gemeenschap.

Het proces van continue vergelijking heeft centraal gestaan in dit onderzoek en op die manier heeft het ons begrip van op geloof gebaseerde organisaties verbeterd door

een nieuw vergelijkend perspectief te bieden dat het belang van de wisselwerking tussen neoliberalisme en secularisme erkent. Door een vergelijkend perspectief toe te passen dat specifiek een vermeend seculier land (Nederland) tegenover een vermeend religieus land (de VS) plaatst, konden gemeenschappelijke lijnen worden onderscheiden die deze organisaties in heel verschillende nationale contexten hebben gestimuleerd en mogelijk gemaakt.

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# APPENDICES

## APPENDIX A. U.S CITIES AND CHARACTERISTICS CONSIDERED DURING CASE SELECTION

| City | Total Population | African-American (% of pop) | Immigrants* (% of population) | Percentage of foreign-born, Asia |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Atlanta | 445,709 | 56% | 7% | 24% |
| Baltimore | 639,343 | 64% | 6% | 25% |
| Boston | 613,086 | 26% | 28% | 24% |
| Chicago | 2,725,206 | 35% | 22% | 19% |
| Denver | 584,563 | 11% | 18% | 15% |
| Las Vegas | 564,484 | 12% | 23% | 20% |
| Los Angeles | 3,749,058 | 11% | 40% | 26% |
| Miami | 349,856 | 22% | 58% | 1% |
| Philadelphia | 1,448,911 | 45% | 11% | 38% |
| Phoenix | 1,468,633 | 6% | 24% | 9% |
| Portland | 551,226 | 8% | 13% | 36% |
| Sacramento | 446,530 | 16% | 22% | 44% |
| Seattle | 571,293 | 9% | 18% | 52% |
| Tucson | 532,288 | 5% | 16% | 13% |
| Washington. D.C. | 588,373 | 56% | 13% | 18% |

* Based on birthplace

[1] Over the last 12 months, in 2008 inflation-adjusted dollars.

Source:

U.S. Census Bureau; 2006-2008 American Community Survey (ACS) using American Factfinder <http://factfinder.census.gov/servlet/DatasetMainPageServlet?_program=ACS&_submenuId=&_lang=en&_ts=>, (February 21 2010).

| Percentage of foreign-born, Europe | Percentage of foreign-born, Latin and Central America | Percentage of foreign-born, Other | Median household income[1] | Percentage households below poverty level |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 16% | 50% | 12% | 47,464 | 17% |
| 19% | 41% | 18% | 39,083 | 19% |
| 16% | 50% | 12% | 51,849 | 19% |
| 19% | 58% | 5% | 46,767 | 18% |
| 10% | 70% | 7% | 45,002 | 16% |
| 8% | 69% | 4% | 55,113 | 11% |
| 7% | 65% | 3% | 48,610 | 17% |
| 3% | 95% | 1% | 29,151 | 27% |
| 22% | 31% | 10% | 36,222 | 22% |
| 6% | 81% | 5% | 49,933 | 14% |
| 24% | 34% | 11% | 48,993 | 15% |
| 8% | 40% | 9% | 50,651 | 13% |
| 15% | 20% | 19% | 61,055 | 12% |
| 8% | 75% | 5% | 37,936 | 17% |
| 17% | 50% | 17% | 56,428 | 16% |

## APPENDIX B. INTERVIEW GUIDE

Interviews were semi-structured; the questions below were used as a guide. The questions provided an entry into the topic of interest and were followed by probing questions to uncover greater detail. Questions were posed in different ways to different types of interviewees – congregants, residents, city officials – as appropriate to their relationship to the organisations and neighbourhoods. The questions focussed on three primary areas of interest: the nature of the organisation (composition, activities, funding); the relationship between the organisation and the neighbourhood; and the role of religion in the organisation.

The following basic demographic data was gathered from each interviewee:

- Gender
- Age
- Ethnicity
- Employment status (employed or unemployed)
- Legal status (if possible)
- Religious affiliation

### *Focus 1: Organisational activities*

1. What does the organisation do? Why?
2. How did the organisation come into existence? Why?
3. How do people know about the organisation?
4. Do you provide services during the day or at other times as well (for example, evenings, weekends)? Is there a difference between services offered at different times? (Do different types of people use them? Do different types of people provide them?)
5. Do you do find yourself/staff doing things that you are not "officially" committed to doing?
6. How are you staffed and how many of your staff are paid? Are there many volunteers? If so, do volunteers do volunteers and staff perform different tasks and activities?
7. What is your most frequently used program or service?
8. How are is the organisation funded?
9. Are there any other religious groups that the organisation works with? In what ways?
10. Are there any non-religious groups that the organisation works with? In what ways?

### *Focus 2: Relationship to the neighbourhood*

1. How would you define "your neighbourhood"?
2. In your view, what do neighbourhood residents think of your organisation? Has this changed over time? (Was this different when the organisation first started?)
3. Do you think this neighbourhood is different from other areas in Philadelphia? In what way?

4. Does this organisation work with the city? With another level of government? In what way?
5. What would be your definition of the church community? The neighbourhood? Do you see these as separate?
6. Do you think this is a neighbourhood organisation? If not, what kind of organisation do you think it is: for example, do you think it is city-wide or national?
7. Did being in contact [working with or receiving help from] this organisation change how you think about your neighbourhood? In what way?
8. Did being in contact [working with or receiving help from] this organisation change how you think about Philadelphia?
9. Did being in contact [working with or receiving help from] this organisation change how you think about your place in your neighbourhood? Your place in Philadelphia?
10. What do you think are the benefits of having this organisation in your neighbourhood?

### *Focus 3: The role of religion*

1. Do you think the neighbourhood is more religious or less than other neighbourhoods?
2. Do you think of this organisation as a religious organisation? In what way?
3. Is there something about the presence of religion that makes this organisation different?
4. Do you think a non-religious organisation could do the same work? Why? Why not?
5. Are you a religious person? Did that have something to with why you chose to work with this organisation?
6. Do you think religion made you choose this organisation?
7. Do you think this organisation has changed your view of religion?
8. Would you feel differently about the work of this organisation and its place in the neighbourhood if it was not religious?
9. Are there non-religious organisations that do similar things in this neighbourhood? Why have you chosen this organisation over them?
10. Do you think more religious organisations should do these kinds of things?

## APPENDIX C. STATEMENT OF CONFIDENTIALITY

This statement was provided to interviewees either in writing or orally, at the beginning of the in-depth interview.

Candice Dias
Urban and Regional Studies Institute
University of Groningen
The Netherlands

### *Understanding faith-based organisations that engage in community building*

*Statement on confidentiality*

I will treat conversations and any information I receive as confidential, in that I will not share these with other members of the congregation, and will use them for research purposes only. When I draw upon interviews, conversations, etc. for my research, I will anonymise the information as much as possible. This means that I will remove information with the goal that individuals will not be identifiable. For people who hold an official position – for example, as the head of a committee or program – we will mutually establish whether our conversation is a public one or a private one.

In some cases, I may ask to tape our conversation. I use the recording as a supplement to my notes to maintain accuracy. I intend to keep these recordings for 3 years after I complete my dissertation; at that point, I will destroy the recordings.

I am open to answering further questions on the issues of confidentiality. I am also open to mutually deciding, on an individual basis, whether a conversation is public or private.

*Who sees this information in the end?*

The primary purpose of my research is to produce a dissertation which will be published by my university in the Netherlands. I will also publish articles in academic journals based on my research. The audience for both is small and specialised.

*Further questions or concerns?*

Please feel free to contact me via e-mail at *c.dias@rug.nl* or telephone at 267.439.2168.